This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

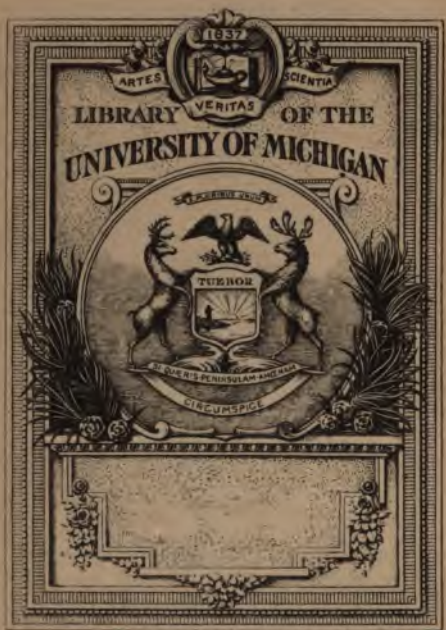
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


1837
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
CIRCUMSPICE

PR
338
.A5
S7
18
v.2

UNIV. OF MICH.

UNIV. OF MICH.

THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER,

BY

ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ. L.L.D.

VOL. V.

THE LODGE, WESTON.

London.

[illegible] & CHADOCK, PATERNOSTER ROW

[illegible]

UNIV.
OF
MICH.

THE

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

COMPRISING

HIS POEMS,

CORRESPONDENCE, AND TRANSLATIONS.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE EDITOR,

ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq. LL. D.

POET LAUREATE, ETC.

VOL. V.

LONDON:
BALDWIN AND CRADOCK,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1836.

CHISWICK PRESS:
C. WHITTINGHAM, COLLEGE HOUSE.

Grad. 2
English
Galloway
3-28-28
16800

CONTENTS.

VOL. V.

1784.

Page

To the Rev. John Newton. March 8. Intercession for a criminal. Intention of translating Caraccioli abandoned. His own state of mind. Incendiary at Olney . 1

To the same. March 11. On Mr. Newton's Letters to an Independent minister. Cowper's notion of his extramundane character. East India bill. Electioneering at Olney 4

To the same. March 19. Caraccioli. Character of his style. Cowper absent in company. Remarks on the Lives of the Poets. Collins 8

To the Rev. William Unwin. March 21. On the Lives of the Poets. Beattie. Commission for a hat . . . 12

To the Rev. John Newton. March 29. Visit from a candidate. Mr. Scott's preaching 15

To the same. April —. Corporal East. Religious remarks. Earthquake in Calabria 18

To the Rev. William Unwin. April 5. Beattie. Blair. On the origin of language 21

To the same. April 25. Blair shown to have censured as a fault in Virgil what in reality is a beauty . . . 24

Page

To the Rev. John Newton. April 26. Troubled with rheumatism. Remarks on Beattie and Blair. Electioneering riots 27

To the Rev. William Unwin. May 3. On painting the face 31

To the same. May 8. John Gilpin; a sequel not to be desired. Objections to publishing it with the Task. Schools 35

To the Rev. John Newton. May 22. Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of his poems. Mr. Bull's pupils. Remarks on ministerial academies 37

To the same. June 5. Dr. Johnson 41

To the Rev. Matthew Powley. June 25. Remarks on a controversial treatise of Mr. Powley's against the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection. Extract from a letter of Mr. Newton's advising that it be not published . . . 41

To the Rev. William Unwin. July 3. Thanks for a Latin dictionary. Intention of reading the classics. Remarks on the tax upon candles. An ass trying his voice . . 45

To the Rev. John Newton. July 5. Jupiter's visit to the Æthiopians. Question how far the wise men of antiquity believed in Paganism. His own indifference as to politics. Taxes 48

To the Rev. William Unwin. July 12. Lady Austen. Alteration proposed in some lines of Vincent Bourne's. Hume's Essay on Suicide 51

To the same. ——. Mrs. Powley's departure. Mr. M. Lady Austen. Westminster grammar. Cold summer. 54

To the same. Lady Austen's illness. Her opinion of Mr. Unwin 59

To the Rev. John Newton. July 19. Commemoration of Handel. Bedlam. A frightful accident. An unexpected letter from Ostend 62

Page

To the Rev. John Newton. July 28. Mr. Newton at Lymington. Mr. Gilpin. Allusion to his own state. Mr. Newton's opponents 65

To the Rev. William Unwin. Aug. 14. Tax on wheels and horses. Walks to Weston. Remarks on the South Sea islanders. Fashions. Restrictions of franking . 68

To the Rev. John Newton. Aug. 16. Pleasures at Olney. A balloon. Cook's last voyage 70

To the same. (Imperfect.) Mr. Teedon. Dispute about erecting a pew 73

To the Rev. William Unwin. Sept. 11. Progress in transcribing the Task. Visit from Mr. Venn; his approbation of the former volume. Cowper pleased, but not elated with praise 74

To Joseph Hill, Esq. Sept. 11. Dr. Cotton 77

To the Rev. John Newton. Sept. 18. His garden. Sweet sounds of nature 77

To the Rev. William Unwin. Oct. 2. Punctuation. Motto for the Task 80

To the Rev. John Newton. Oct. 9. Unconnected thought. The mind sometimes vacant. Remarks on the death of Captain Cook 82

To the Rev. William Unwin. Oct. 10. Sending the MSS. of the Task. His aim in writing 86

To the same. Oct. 20. Intention of completing his poem on School-education, and dedicating it to Mr. Unwin. Doubts concerning a publisher proposed. Corrections examined. Mrs. Powley's illness 88

To the Rev. John Newton. Oct. 30. Sandwich islanders. Knox's Essays. First mention to Mr. Newton of the Task 93

To the Rev. William Unwin. Nov. 1. Glad that John-

Page

son has undertaken the publication. Reasons for keeping his work secret a while. Tirocinium 95

To the Rev. William Bull. Nov. 8. Communicating the purport of his Tirocinium, and asking for a motto to it . 98

To Joseph Hill, Esq. Nov. On his mother's death. Reflections on that of his own mother 99

To the Rev. William Unwin. Nov. 20. Mottoes. Universities. Scene in Westminster Abbey 100

To the Rev. John Newton. Nov. 27. Sending a specimen of the Task 103

To the Rev. William Unwin. ——. Franks. Ipecacuanha 106

To the same. Nov. 29. Mr. Newton's wish to see the proof sheets of the Task. Reasons for not acceding to it. Lunardi 108

To the Rev. John Newton. Dec. 11. Defending the title of the Task, and of its separate books 110

To the Rev. William Unwin. Dec. 18. Tirocinium. Reason for complimenting Bishop Bagot. Mr. Newton hurt concerning the Task 113

To the Rev. John Newton. Christmas Eve. The original title retained. Olney news 116

1785.

To the Rev. William Unwin. Jan. 15. Mr. Newton's feelings concerning the Task. Epitaph on Dr. Johnson. Balloons 118

To the same. Feb. 7. Printing of the Task commenced. His contributions to the Gentleman's Magazine. Lord Archibald Hamilton wishes to become acquainted with him. Mr. Teedon 120

Page

To the Rev. William Unwin. Feb. 28. Intercourse with the great. Tithes. Slow progress in the press;—a simile in poetical prose. Another W. C. in the Gentleman's Magazine 123

To the same. March 20. Opinion of the great. Unreasonableness of his own impatience with the printer's delay 126

To the Rev. John Newton. April 22. John Gilpin. Vanity of popular applause 129

To the Rev. William Unwin. April 30. The Master of St. Paul's wishes to write to the author of John Gilpin. Mr. Newton satisfied about the Task. Old acquaintance. A bird's nest 131

To the Rev. John Newton. June 4. Mr. Greatheed. A case in which the writer might have saved five shillings if he had trusted to his physiognomical feelings . 134

To the Rev. William Unwin. June 12. Expected visit from Mr. Unwin on his way to Dewsbury. Message to his son 138

To the Rev. William Bull. June 13. A note on occasion of his child's illness 140

To Joseph Hill, Esq. June 25. Description of his summer-house 141

To the Rev. William Unwin. July 27. Feelings on his departure. A thunder-storm. Mr. Teedon. Religious impressions 143

To the Rev. John Newton. Aug. 6. Self-abasement. The Task not advertised 146

To the same. Aug. 27. On Dr. Johnson's Diary. State of a neighbouring minister on the approach of death . 151

To the Rev. William Unwin. Aug. 27. Pleasure in his connexion with the Unwins. Dr. Johnson's Diary. *Who* and *that* 156

Page

To the Rev. John Newton. Sept. 24. Recollections of Southampton. Dislike of confinement. Sunday School. Blackguardism of the children at Olney 159

To the same. Oct. 16. On the death of Miss Cunningham. His own despair ascribed to a dream. Mr. Scott's removal to the Lock 163

To the Rev. William Unwin. Oct. 22. His daily task of translation. His letters in the Gentleman's Magazine. Huntingford's Monostrophics. Letters of Literature, by Pinkerton, under the name of Robert Heron 167

To Lady Hesketh. ——. Her bounty. His intention of translating Homer no longer a secret 170

To the Rev. John Newton. Nov. 5. On his narrative of Miss Cunningham's death. Heron's Letters of Literature. The fifth of November at Olney 171

To the Rev. Walter Bagot. Nov. 9. Returning a charge of his brother, the Bishop's 176

To Lady Hesketh. Nov. 23. Happiness in the renewal of their intercourse. Thanks for a present of wine. Recollection of their last meeting. Politics. On the King's stag-hunts 176

To the Rev. William Unwin. Nov. 28. Mr. Bagot's offers of promoting the subscription for his Homer . . 181

To Lady Hesketh. Nov. 30. Thanks for expected presents. Country fowls. Mr. Bagot 182

To the Rev. John Newton. Dec. 3. Death-bed Memoirs. Reasons for translating Homer. Renewal of his intercourse with Lady Hesketh. Hope of better days . . 187

To Lady Hesketh. Dec. 6. Non-arrival of the expected desk. Races on the plain of Troy. His partiality for commons. Odour of the soil 191

To the same. Dec. 7. Homer. The desk 194

Page

To Lady Hesketh. Dec. 15. Writing beneficial to him. His daily task in translating. Remarks on Pope's Homer 199

To the same. (Imperfect.) Visit from the physician: report of his own health 205

To the Rev. William Unwin. Dec. 24. Subscription. The desk 207

To Joseph Hill, Esq. Dec. 24. Informing him of his intended translation 209

To the Rev. William Unwin. Dec. 31. Endeavours to serve himself with his translation. Refusal of a sample. Mr. Smith's bounty to the poor 210

1786.

To the Rev. Matthew Powley. ——. He destroys his friends' letters and wishes them to destroy his. Mr. Newton's letters to his wife. Mr. Postlethwaite's Grammar 213

To Lady Hesketh. ——. Mr. Bull the friend whom he consults upon any difficulty in his translation. The Madans. General Cowper. The anonymous letter . . 215

To the same. Jan. 2. General Cowper. Circumstances during the first part of his abode at Huntingdon. Anonymous letter 217

To the same. Jan. 10. Pleased that she is pleased with Mr. Unwin. Animadversion on the Task as being unequal well received 222

To the Rev. William Unwin. Jan. 14. Glad that his friend has seen Lady Hesketh. Why does the Iliad end with the burial of Hector? Mr. Unwin's censurers 225

Page

To the Rev. John Newton. Jan. 14. Hopes from his subscription. Lord Dartmouth 227
To the Rev. Walter Bagot. Jan. 15. On the specimen of his translation. Bishop Bagot 229
To Lady Hesketh. Jan. 16. Explanation of his anguish of mind. Lady Austen. Remarks on a paper concerning him in the Gentleman's Magazine 231
To the same. Jan. 23. A letter from Anonymous, promising fifty pounds yearly. Good hopes. Elliott's medicines. Friendly exertions of the Bagot family . 239
To the Rev. Walter Bagot. Jan. 23. Maty. Cyril Jackson 245
To Lady Hesketh. Jan. 31. Present from Anonymous. Improved health. Consents to let Maty see a book of his Homer 246
To the same. Feb. 9. Joyful expectations of her promised visit. What she is to expect 250
To the same. Feb. 11. Vexatious criticisms. Thurlow's former promise 252
To the Rev. John Newton. Feb. 18. State of mind in which he entered on his translation. Account of his presents. Mottoes 255
To Lady Hesketh. Feb. 19. Arrangements for her coming. Homer. His critics 258
To the Rev. Walter Bagot. Feb. 27. On Mrs. Bagot's death 261
To Lady Hesketh. Feb. 27. Dream of her arrival. Mrs. Bagot. General Cowper's criticisms. His question concerning Mrs. Unwin noticed. Lady Austen . 262
To the same. March 6. Elisions. Pleased with his bookseller's conduct 268
To the Rev. William Unwin. March 13. Begging to

Page

be released from a promise of putting the MS. into his hands, because it must be sent to Fuseli 271

To Lady Hesketh. March 20. Letter-writing. Versification 272

To the same. March 29. Proposing lodgings. Account of Olney 277

To the Rev. John Newton. April 1. Price fixed for his translation not unreasonable. Expected visits . . . 282

To Lady Hesketh. April 3. Objecting to any delay of her visit, and assuring her that he no longer obtrudes his religious sentiments on others. Letter from Martin Madan 284

To the same. April 10. Impossible for him to remove to Hadley. Mr. Burrows. Lodging hunting. Part of the vicarage taken for Lady Hesketh 291

To the same. April 17. Description of the vicarage. Letter from Anonymous. State of his eyes. Thurlow 298

To the same. April 24. He loves *talking* letters like hers. Cowpership. A morsel of praise 301

To the same. May 1. She must bring her horses as well as carriage. Weston their favourite walk. Poplars at Lavendon. Visit at Weston Hall 304

To the same. May 8. Maty's opinion of his specimen unfavourable, and Colman's favourable. Cowper vexed. A house at Weston vacant 309

To the same. May 15. Anticipations of their meeting. Avowal of ambition 314

To the Rev. Walter Bagot. May 20. Revising his translation. Horace's principle of publishing nothing in haste carried too far 318

To Lady Hesketh. May 25. Gives up the intention of meeting her at Newport Pagnel. House at Weston.

Page

Lines in the Task taken for Young's. His spirits. Friendship for eternity 321

To Lady Hesketh. May 29. Spring passing away. His workshop. Expectation of benefit from her coming . 325

To the same. June 4 and 5. Former days. Delay of her coachmaker. Visit to the Throckmortons . . . 327

To Joseph Hill, Esq. June 9. Thurlow's illness. Renewed intercourse with Colman. The Nonsense Club 330

To Lady Hesketh. June 12. Delay and impatience. Arrangements for her arrival 332

To Joseph Hill, Esq. June 19. Announcing their intended removal to Weston 338

To the Rev. William Unwin. July 3. Lady Hesketh's arrival. Advantage of the intended removal 339

To the Rev. Walter Bagot. July 4. Fuseli. Homer. Dennis 343

To the Rev. John Newton. July. His happiness in Lady Hesketh's society. Mr. Newton's sermons 345

To the same. Aug. 5. Unhealthiness of their situation at Olney. State of his mind 348

To the Rev. William Unwin. Aug. 9. Concerning a pupil. Preparations at Weston 351

To the same. Aug. 24. The pupil. Diligence in correcting his translation. The Throckmortons' kindness 353

To the same. ——. Pleasant recollections of his school boy days at Westminster 355

Yours affect. & much obliged
John Newton

1798

THE

LETTERS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 8, 1784.

By this time I suppose the unhappy young man to whom you paid your charitable visit in Bridewell, is on the point of removing from Newgate, where he has been sometime, to Maidstone, his place of trial. His parents, especially his mother, are, as may be supposed, in the deepest affliction, in which his aunt * * * * * is a sharer. She was with me this morning, charged with the fourth message of the kind, entreating me to intercede with Lord Dartmouth to intercede with the Judge, and to bespeak his favour;—a wild application, dictated by distress and ignorance of the integrity with which justice is administered in this country. I believe I have convinced them of the impropriety and indeed of the impossibility of all such sinister anticipation, but have not been able to excuse myself from the task of recommending him to the intercession of Lord Dartmouth, should he be con-

demned, an event which seems to be certain. I have told them, (for I thought it would be cruel not to do so,) that I can give them no encouragement to expect that my interposition will do them any service; that there being no circumstance in the complexion of his case that seems to single him out from the common herd of offenders, and to give colour to such a proceeding, I did not at all suppose that his lordship would be willing to undertake the office; or that if he should, the king would be entreated, mercy not being so much a matter of mere favour as not to be determined in its operations by the peculiar and distinguishing features of the case. Thus stands the affair. I could not decline a labour to which common humanity calls me, though in consideration of the hopelessness of my errand, for his lordship's sake as well as my own, I would gladly have done so.

I thank you for the two first numbers of the Theological Miscellany. I have not read them regularly through, but sufficiently to observe that they are much indebted to Omicron. An essay, signed Parvulus, pleased me likewise; and I shall be glad if a neighbour of ours, to whom I have lent them, should be able to apply to his own use the lesson it inculcates. On further consideration I have seen reason to forego my purpose of translating Caraccioli. Though I think no book more calculated to teach the art of pious meditation, or to enforce a conviction of the vanity of all pursuits that have not the soul's interests for their object, I can yet see a flaw in his manner of instructing, that in a country so enlightened as ours would *escape* nobody's notice. Not enjoying the advantages

of evangelical ordinances, and Christian communion, he falls into a mistake natural in his situation; ascribing always the pleasures he found in a holy life to his own industrious perseverance in a contemplative course, and not to the immediate agency of the great Comforter of his people; and directing the eye of his readers to a spiritual principle within, which he supposes to subsist in the soul of every man, as the source of all divine enjoyment, and not to Christ, as he would gladly have done, had he fallen under Christian teachers. Allowing for these defects, he is a charming writer, and by those who know how to make such allowances, may be read with great delight and improvement. But with these defects in his manner, though, I believe, no man ever had a heart more devoted to God, he does not seem dressed with sufficient exactness to be fit for the public eye, where man is known to be nothing, and Jesus all in all. He must therefore be dismissed as an unsuccessful candidate for a place in this Miscellany, and will be less mortified at being rejected in the first instance, than if he had met with a refusal from the publisher. I can only therefore repeat what I said before, that when I find a proper subject, and myself at liberty to pursue it, I will endeavour to contribute my quota. But alas! where spiritual communications are in question, the heart rather than the head is wanted. I could draw the picture of Despair at any time; I could delineate the country through which he travels, and describe his progress, could trace him from melancholy to rage, from rage to obduracy, and from obduracy to indifference about the event; and this I could do in prose or

verse with the greatest facility, but to what good purpose? Like Cibber's mad figures upon Bedlam gate, the representation might be allowed to be just, but if it were admired would be so only in proportion as it shocked.

Last Tuesday evening we were alarmed by another fire. A barn adjoining to George Gee's malthouse was burnt to the ground; his building escaped, though a part of the thatch of it was consumed. The wind would have brought it our way had it blown at all, for it was in the east, but the weather was perfectly calm. There is no doubt of its having been kindled maliciously.

Mrs. Unwin is very sorry to be so troublesome on the old subject of worsted, but her whole stock is nearly exhausted. She is well, and joins in love with your faithful and affectionate

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, March 11, 1784.

I LITTLE thought when I made myself merry with our pretty, plausible candidate, that I was laughing at your expense. Had I suspected any such consequence, I should have postponed my joke to a more convenient opportunity. The newspaper having always come uncharged, I had reason to hope that the same grace and favour would have been vouchsafed to a letter of mine, and what was the cause of so partial a distinction, am at a loss to imagine.

I return you many thanks for your Apology, which

I have read with great pleasure[1]. You know of old that your style always pleases me: and having in a former letter given you the reasons for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit, too, in which you write, pleases me as much. But I perceive that in some cases it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good-tempered; in all cases I suppose where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions, truth itself seems a satire, because by implication at least it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason perhaps you will find that you have made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible that they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert, and to prove, that an enlightened minister of the Gospel may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety, continue in the establishment; and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of some dissenting doctors; and to nettle them still the more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity of being silent, by declaring that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole however I have no doubt that your Apology will do good. If it should irritate some, who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them, that there may

[1] The book alluded to is entitled "Apologia. Four Letters to a Minister of an Independent Church. By a Minister of the Church of England."

be grace, truth, and efficacy, in the ministry of a church of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention to which, both from the nature of the subject, and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

It is hardly possible for a man to interest himself less than I do in what passes in the political world. I have my own reasons for discharging myself of that burthen, and such reasons as I believe no man ever had but myself. Had I dropped from the moon into this system eleven years ago, the concerns of a world to which I did not naturally belong, would not have engaged me much; and just as little engaged I feel myself under a persuasion which nothing has yet shaken, that I am an extra-mundane character with reference to this globe of yours; and that, though not a native of the moon, I was not however made of the dust of this planet. Yet I confess that for the sake of amusement, and that I may forget as much as possible my terrible translation out of an England that gave me birth into an England that did not, I sometimes talk upon these subjects, and to you have sometimes written upon them, as if they were indeed as important to me as they are to every man around me. Nor have I any objection to doing so at this moment. Know, then, that my reasons for thinking (in which thoughts I appear to you to be singular) that the present contest is between the Crown and the Commons are these: the Crown, no less than the India Company, quarrelled with Fox's India Bill: the Crown, for causes palpable enough, espoused the cause of Mr. Pitt's. *The Crown* interfered by a whispered message to

nullify the former, and by upholding the new minister in his place, in opposition to a majority of the House, in hopes to give effect to the latter; but finding itself unable to carry this favourite point in a Parliament so unfriendly to its designs, the Crown dissolved it; expecting, and I fear with too good reason, that a new one will be more propitious. Thus in short hand I have accounted for my opinion; for as to what is said by many, of the King's personal dislike of Fox and Lord North, I put it pretty much out of the question; hoping, at least, that he is a more sensible King than to throw the whole business of his empire into a state of distraction, merely to gratify a pique against two individuals. The patronage of the East Indies will be a dangerous weapon in whatever hands; I had rather, however, see it lodged any where than with the Crown. In that event, I should say adieu for ever to every hope of an uncorrupt representation, and consequently to every hope of constitutional liberty for the subject. In one point, after all, we are agreed, we think favourably of neither party; and for my own particular, I can truly say, that I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same that I have of a possibility that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our Western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favour on the opposite side; in which case we shall be poor, but I think we shall stand a better chance to be free: and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast, and be no man's slave, than wear a chain, and drink tea as usual.

We received the last parcel of worsted by Grace Stamford, and return Mrs. Newton many thanks. But little news is stirring. The election has made a great noise in the steeple, and some in the street; but at length we are quiet again. The Squire of Weston assisted in canvassing the town for Lord Verney, and met with several affronts, but was especially insulted by wrong-headed Nathan Sample; who, it seems, has much the same aversion to a Papist that some people have to a cat; rather an antipathy than a reasonable dislike. Pentecross wrote a letter to Jones, in which he represented the cause of Pitt as the cause of God: but for want of *his* spectacles I could not clearly discern it to be so. Molly Clifton is dead and buried; the rest of us, I believe, are all alive and unburied. Mr. Scott had a political epistle of his printed in last Thursday's General Evening;—plain, I thought, and sensible.

I have just room to add, that we love you as usual, and are your very affectionate William and Mary.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 19, 1784.

I WISH it were in my power to give you any account of the Marquis Caraccioli. Some years since I saw a short history of him in the Review, of which I recollect no particulars, except that he was (and for aught I know may be still) an officer in the Prussian service. I have two volumes of his works, lent me by Lady Austen. One is upon the subject of self-acquaintance,

and the other treats of the art of conversing with the same gentleman. Had I pursued my purpose of translating him, my design was to have furnished myself, if possible, with some authentic account of him, which I suppose may be procured at any bookseller's who deals in foreign publications. But for the reasons given in my last I have laid aside the design. There is something in his style that touches me exceedingly, and which I do not know how to describe. I should call it pathetic, if it were occasional only, and never occurred but when his subject happened to be particularly affecting. But it is universal; he has not a sentence that is not marked with it. Perhaps therefore I may describe it better by saying, that his whole work has an air of pious and tender melancholy, which to me at least is extremely agreeable. This property of it, which depends perhaps altogether upon the arrangement of his words, and the modulation of his sentences, it would be very difficult to preserve in a translation. I do not know that our language is capable of being so managed, and rather suspect that it is not, and that it is peculiar to the French, because it is not unfrequent among their writers, and I never saw any thing similar to it in our own.

I converse, you say, upon other subjects, than that of despair, and may therefore write upon others. Indeed, my friend, I am a man of very little conversation upon any subject. From that of despair I abstain as much as possible, for the sake of my company; but I will venture to say that it is never out of my mind one minute in the whole day. I do not mean to say that I am never cheerful. I am often so; always, indeed,

when my nights have been undisturbed for a season. But the effect of such continual listening to the language of a heart hopeless and deserted, is, that I can never give much more than half my attention to what is started by others, and very rarely start any thing myself. My silence, however, and my absence of mind, make me sometimes as entertaining as if I had wit. They furnish an occasion for friendly and good-natured raillery; they raise a laugh, and I partake of it. But you will easily perceive that a mind thus occupied is but indifferently qualified for the consideration of theological matters. The most useful and the most delightful topics of that kind are to me forbidden fruit;—I tremble if I approach them. It has happened to me sometimes that I have found myself imperceptibly drawn in, and made a party in such discourse. The consequence has been, dissatisfaction and self-reproach. You will tell me, perhaps, that I have written upon these subjects in verse, and may, therefore, if I please, in prose. But there is a difference. The search after poetical expression, the rhyme, and the numbers, are all affairs of some difficulty; they amuse, indeed, but are not to be attained without study, and engross, perhaps, a larger share of the attention than the subject itself. Persons fond of music will sometimes find pleasure in the tune, when the words afford them none. There are, however, subjects that do not always terrify me by their importance; such, I mean, as relate to Christian life and manners; and when such an one presents itself, and finds me in a frame of mind that does not absolutely forbid the employment, I shall most readily give it my

attention, for the sake, however, of your request merely. Verse is my favourite occupation, and what I compose in that way, I reserve for my own use hereafter.

My evenings are devoted to books. I read aloud for the entertainment of the party, thus making amends by a vociferation of two hours for my silence at other times.

I have lately finished eight volumes of Johnson's Prefaces, or Lives of the Poets. In all that number I observe but one man,—a poet of no great fame,—of whom I did not know that he existed till I found him there, whose mind seems to have had the slightest tincture of religion; and he was hardly in his senses. His name was Collins. He sunk into a state of melancholy, and died young. Not long before his death, he was found at his lodgings in Islington by his biographer, with the New Testament in his hand. He said to Johnson, "I have but one book, but it is the best." Of him, therefore, there are some hopes. But from the lives of all the rest there is but one inference to be drawn:—that poets are a very worthless, wicked set of people.

Mrs. Unwin sends her love; she is much obliged to Mrs. Newton for the care she has taken about the worsted. She had no suspicion that Mrs. Newton had forgot it, but supposed her correspondent might. We are in good health, and waiting as patiently as we can for the end of this second winter. The news is—that the brother of farmer Rush, a very sober young man, was driving his waggon last week to Bedford,

and in the way ordered his man forward with the team, saying he would follow him, but he has never been heard of since.

Yours, my dear friends, truly,

WM. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, March 21, 1784.

I THANK you for the entertainment you have afforded me. I often wish for a library, often regret my folly in selling a good collection; but I have one in Essex. It is rather remote, indeed, too distant for occasional reference; but it serves the purpose of amusement, and a waggon being a very suitable vehicle for an author, I find myself commodiously supplied. Last night I made an end of reading Johnson's Prefaces; but the number of poets whom he has vouchsafed to chronicle being fifty-six, there must be many with whose history I am not yet acquainted. These, or some of these, if it suits you to give them a part of your chaise, when you come, will be heartily welcome. I am very much the biographer's humble admirer. His uncommon share of good sense, and his forcible expression, secure to him that tribute from all his readers. He has a penetrating insight into character, and a happy talent of correcting the popular opinion, upon all occasions where it is erroneous; and this he does with the boldness of a man who will think for himself, but, at the same time, with a justness of sentiment that convinces us he does not differ from

others through affectation, but because he has a sounder judgement. This remark, however, has his narrative for its object, rather than his critical performance. In the latter, I do not think him always just, when he departs from the general opinion. He finds no beauties in Milton's Lycidas. He pours contempt upon Prior, to such a degree, that were he really as undeserving of notice as he represents him, he ought no longer to be numbered among the poets. These, indeed, are the two capital instances in which he has offended me. There are others less important, which I have not room to enumerate, and in which I am less confident that he is wrong. What suggested to him the thought that the Alma was written in imitation of Hudibras, I cannot conceive. In former years, they were both favourites of mine, and I often read them; but never saw in them the least resemblance to each other; nor do I now, except that they are composed in verse of the same measure. After all, it is a melancholy observation, which it is impossible not to make, after having run through this series of poetical lives, that where there were such shining talents, there should be so little virtue. These luminaries of our country seem to have been kindled into a brighter blaze than others, only that their spots might be more noticed! So much can nature do for our intellectual part, and so little for our moral. What vanity, what petulance in Pope! How painfully sensible of censure, and yet how restless in provocation! To what mean artifices could Addison stoop, in hopes of injuring the reputation of his friend! Savage, how sordidly vicious,

and the more condemned for the pains that are taken to palliate his vices. Offensive as they appear through a veil, how would they disgust without one. What a sycophant to the public taste was Dryden; sinning against his feelings, lewd in his writings, though chaste in his conversation. I know not but one might search these eight volumes with a candle, as the prophet says, to find a man, and not find one, unless, perhaps, Arbuthnot were he.

I shall begin Beattie this evening, and propose to myself much satisfaction in reading him. In him, at least, I shall find a man whose faculties have now and then a glimpse from Heaven upon them;—a man, not indeed in possession of much evangelical light, but faithful to what he has, and never neglecting an opportunity to use it. How much more respectable such a character, than that of thousands who would call him blind, and yet have not the grace to practise half his virtues! He, too, is a poet, and wrote the Minstrel. The specimens which I have seen of it pleased me much. If you have the whole, I should be glad to read it. I may, perhaps, since you allow me the liberty, indulge myself here and there, with a marginal annotation, but shall not use that allowance wantonly, so as to deface the volumes.

Your mother wishes you to buy for her ten yards and a half of yard-wide Irish, from two shillings to two shillings and sixpence per yard; and my head will be equally obliged to you for a hat, of which I enclose a string that gives you the circumference. The depth of the crown must be four inches and one-eighth. Let

it not be a round slouch, which I abhor, but a smart well-cocked fashionable affair. A fashionable hat likewise for your mother; a black one if they are worn, otherwise chip.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 29, 1784.

It being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid

announced Mr. Grenville. Puss[1] was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. Grenville advancing toward me shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, the drapier, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he

[1] His tame hare.

wore suspended by a ribband from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town however seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not I suppose have been bound to produce them.

Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication

of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

Many thanks for the worsted, which is excellent. We are as well as a spring hardly less severe than the severest winter will give us leave to be. With our united love, we conclude ourselves yours and Mrs. Newton's affectionate and faithful

W. C.
M. U.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April, 1784.

HAVING been obliged by the account given of Corporal East in your last, to form a less favourable opinion of his pretensions to the Christian character than his apparent modesty and spirituality had filled me with, I am not sorry to have had an opportunity to speak my mind to him. After the arrival of your letter I likewise saw Mr. Bull, who related to me what had passed between him and a certain other soldier, on the subject of that man's character and conduct. The regiment being disembodied, he paid me a second visit last Thursday morning, in his way to London, where, he said, he expected to find work, having sought it in vain at Northampton. I saw him coming, and being at first very unwilling to enter upon the business of crimination, sent him word that we were engaged. This was true, for we were just sitting down to breakfast, at which time one generally finds a mere spectator inconvenient. I meant that he should walk

off, but he did not choose to understand me. After breakfast, therefore, I ordered him into the parlour. In the first place, I told him he had misinformed us when he said that you had sent him, you being yourself the witness; he was unwilling to confess a direct falsehood, and therefore replied, that he was much mistaken if you had not. I rejoined, You certainly then are much mistaken. I next addressed him with a long detail of the particular crimes with which his fellow-soldier and common report had charged him. But here again he found it convenient to have a bad memory. He could not recollect that he had ever been guilty of swearing, since he made a profession; or of gaming, except that once he threw dice for a mutton pie; or of drunkenness more than once, since he became a militia man. The best advice I could give him was to confront his accuser in the presence of Mr. Bull, before whom he had lodged his accusation; but he said the man was gone into Bedfordshire, and where to find him he knew not. Thus we parted,—he disappointed, that instead of money, which I dare say he came for, he had met with a reproof; and I glad to be rid of him in a way which pretty well secures me from the danger of seeing him again. He did not weep, but he trembled so that his knees would hardly support him. I have heard worse of him since, and worse than I am willing to believe, notwithstanding my present thoughts of him.

People that are but little acquainted with the terrors of divine wrath, are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker. But for my own part I would sooner take Empedocles's leap, and fling myself into Mount

Ætna, than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the Scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy; it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set forth that measure of it only which may be endured even in this life, the Christian world perhaps would have been less comfortable; but I believe presumptuous meddlers with the Gospel would have been less frequently met with. The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find that he has burnt them.

What havoc in Calabria! every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God, or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other: but with reference to the divine power they are equally fixed, or equally unstable. The inhabitants of a rock shall sink, while a cockboat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the carnival. But it seems they are as offensive to Him, whose vicegerent he pretends himself, at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence, for this time forth for ever. There is a word that makes this world tremble; and the Pope cannot countermand it. A fig for such a *conjuror*! Pharaoh's conjurors had twice his ability.

Our thanks are due for a pair of fine soles and a lobster, and we sincerely pay them. Give our love to Mrs. Newton, and accept it yourself.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, April 5, 1784.

THE hat which I desired you to procure for me, I now write to desire that you will not procure. Do not hastily infer that I mean to go about bareheaded: the whole of the matter is, that a readier method of supply has presented itself since I wrote.

I thanked you in my last for Johnson; I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agreeable and amiable writer I ever met with; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and which is very rare, we see not only the writer but the man: and that man so gentle, so well-tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him, if one has the least sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the Minstrel, and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so

expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie.

I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Doctor Blair has such a brain as Shakespeare somewhere describes as "dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

I take it for granted that these good men are philosophically correct (for they are both agreed upon the subject) in their account of the origin of language; and if the Scripture had left us in the dark upon that article, I should very readily adopt their hypothesis for want of better information. I should suppose, for instance, that man made his first effort in speech in the way of an interjection, and that ah, or oh, being uttered with wonderful gesticulation, and variety of attitude, must have left his powers of expression quite exhausted: that in a course of time he would invent names for many things, but first for the objects of his daily wants. An apple would consequently be called an apple, and perhaps not many years would elapse before the appellation would receive the sanction of general use. In this case, and upon this supposition, seeing one in the hand of another man, he would ex*claim* with a most moving pathos, "Oh apple!"—Well

and good—oh apple! is a very affecting speech, but in the mean time it profits him nothing. The man that holds it, eats it, and *he* goes away with "oh apple" in his mouth, and with nothing better. Reflecting upon his disappointment, and that perhaps it arose from his not being more explicit, he contrives a term to denote his idea of transfer or gratuitous communication, and the next occasion that offers of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech now stands thus, "Oh give apple!" The apple-holder perceives himself called upon to part with his fruit, and, having satisfied his own hunger, is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately there is still room for a mistake, and a third person being present, he gives the apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again perceiving that his language has not all the precision that is requisite, the orator retires to his study, and there, after much deep thinking, conceives that the insertion of a pronoun, whose office shall be to signify that he not only wants the apple to be given, but given to himself, will remedy all defects, he uses it the next opportunity, and succeeds to a wonder, obtains the apple, and by his success such credit to his invention, that pronouns continue to be in great repute ever after.

Now as my two syllablemongers, Beattie and Blair, both agree that language was originally inspired, and that the great variety of languages we find upon earth at present took its rise from the confusion of tongues at Babel, I am not perfectly convinced that there is any just occasion to invent this very ingenious solution of a difficulty, which Scripture has solved already. My opinion however is, if I may presume to have an

opinion of my own, so different from theirs who are so much wiser than myself, that if man had been his own teacher, and had acquired his words and his phrases only as necessity or convenience had prompted, his progress must have been considerably slower than it was, and in Homer's days the production of such a poem as the Iliad impossible. On the contrary, I doubt not that Adam on the very day of his creation was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for sublime diction, and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, April 25, 1784.

I WISH I had both burning words, and bright thoughts, but have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day, and having already written a long letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give to you as much as I can spare of the present evening. I have also been ill with a rheumatism in my back, which though in a great measure removed, has left an aching sensation behind it, which my pre*sent occupation* makes me feel more sensibly. Do not

imagine that I have a design to enhance the merit of my punctuality by an enumeration of the difficulties under which I observe it. I mean no more than an apology for sending you a sheet, which, when it arrives, you will not find it worthy of your perusal.

Since I despatched my last, Blair has crept a little further into my favour. As his subjects improve, he improves with them; but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as with so much knowledge it is possible to be. His language is, (except Swift's,) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author, than really tastes them; and who finds that a passage is praiseworthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more largely, had I read the books to myself; but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunderstorm in the first Georgic, which ends with

Ingeminant austri, et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and consequently most striking. He therefore admires the effects of the thunderbolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression; and in the instance in question I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such as only the word *ingeminant* could describe; and the words *densissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the Æneid contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad that Dr. Conyers has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify his choice: fear not,—you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and that therefore will not fail you upon this. The burning words

come always fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Thanks for the fish, with its companion a lobster, which we mean to eat to-morrow. We want four Chinese tooth-brushes, they cost a shilling each, the harder the better. Thanks also for the hat, which is greatly admired, and for the Minstrel, which I dare say I shall admire no less. Beattie is become my favourite author of all the moderns; he is so aimable I long to know him.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 26, 1784.

We are truly sorry that you have been indisposed. It is well however to have passed through such a season and to have fared no worse. A cold and a sore-throat are troublesome things, but in general an ague is more troublesome; and in this part of the world few have escaped one. I have lately been an invalid myself, and have just recovered from a rheumatic pain in my back, the most excruciating of the sort I ever felt. There was talk of bleeding and blistering, but I escaped with only an embrocation and a box of pills. Mr. Grindon attended me, who though he fidgets about the world as usual, is, I think, a dying man, having had some time since a stroke of apoplexy, and lately a paralytic one. His loss will be felt in this country. Though I do not think him absolutely an

Æsculapius, I believe him to be as skilful as most of his fraternity in the neighbourhood, besides which, he has the merit of being extremely cautious, a very necessary quality in a practitioner upon the constitutions of others.

We are glad that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but your accession to their party; but the liberal will say you do well, and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested.

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished, I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects that I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so familiar that we seem to be conversing with an old friend, upon terms of the most sociable intercourse, while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his air is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious that he is addressing the public, and too solicitous about his success, to indulge himself for a moment in that play of fancy which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar, in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man; indeed so amiable, that I have wished for his acquaintance ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I *felt* myself too a little disposed to compliment my own

acumen upon the occasion. For though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find that they had any great news to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my own observations into some method, but have not suggested many, of which I was not by some means or other previously apprized. In fact, critics did not originally beget authors; but authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject; genius prompted them with embellishments, and then came the critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come, and having drawn their rules for good writing from what was actually well written, boasted themselves the inventors of an art which yet the authors of the day had already exemplified. They are however useful in their way, giving us at one view a map of the boundaries which propriety sets to fancy; and serving as judges, to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those who have had the hardiness to transgress them.

The candidates for this county have set an example of economy, which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble; a reform however which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of

their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. Ashburner was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him,— he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his skull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it: and in five minutes twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend; writing makes my back ache, and my paper is full.

We love you, and are yours,

W. AND M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 3, 1784.

THE subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any further than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgement of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than he would if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgement of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally either brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and secondly, to the

their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. Ashburner was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him,—he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his skull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it: and in five minutes twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend; writing makes my back ache, and my paper is full.

We love you, and are yours,

W. AND M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 3, 1784.

THE subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any further than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgement of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than he would if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgement of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally either brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and secondly, to the

inartificial manner in which they paint: for they do not, as I am most satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England, (I am afraid,) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? this was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious, till she attained an age, that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature has made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our country-women. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art? and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here therefore my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character; and in no instance should *I think* the worse of one because she was painted.

But an English belle must pardon me, if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic: and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled, were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. In no other case however can I imagine the practice in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one; but they cannot, (at least they hardly can,) give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel, which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one, commonly uses both. Now all white

paints, or lotions, or whatever they may be called, are mercurial, consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B—— above mentioned was a miserable witness of this truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady Coventry was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality, of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons, I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England: and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art. For in the use of French women, I think it as innocent as in the use of a wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue, perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive valeque.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, May 8, 1784.

WHEN our correspondents send us money, I always hold them entitled to an immediate answer; accordingly, though since the arrival of yours, I have only had time to run through the newspaper, I am now with pen in hand, upon the point of informing you that your letter, together with its contents, is at this moment safe at Olney.

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own; for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament, as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of John Gilpin, recommended to me by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves, when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero, published by Bladon, and to tell me what it is made of. But buy it not; for, puffed as it is in the papers, it can be but a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last pacquet but one that I received from Johnson, he asked me if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any; for that to print only the original again

would be to publish what has been hacknied in every magazine, in every newspaper, and in every street. I answered, that the copy which I sent him contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose, and that if he thought him now too trite to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgement. I take it for granted therefore that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It may spring from a principle of pride; but spring it from what it may, I feel, and have long felt, a disinclination to a public avowal that he is mine; and since he became so popular, I have felt it more than ever; not that I should have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of the Task, I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content therefore with having laughed, and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success, as a poet, upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to *an end of* the Task, and the next fortnight to an end

of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken, if Tirocinium do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has, nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you.

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your mother's remembrances,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, May 22, 1784.

I AM glad to have received at last an account of Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded that, not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and

the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom show mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore enclose a short acknowledgement, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can I imagine without much difficulty convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. To him I also make my compliments, with thanks for the share he took in the patronage of the volume. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr. Bull. What harder task can any man undertake than the management of those, who have reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot, or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present however I am not surprised that, being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited; qualities, that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance. He dined with us since I received your last. It was on Thursday that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints: but we sent him away cheerful. He is very sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion; and indeed it does them honour; for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moment's regard, when brought by five such coxcombs against a man of his erudition and ability. The worst part of the business is, that unless young men can be found

modest, well tempered, humble, and teachable, there seems to be no hope. He is indeed nervous, and may seem to want those stern features, and that determined tone and manner that are almost indispensably requisite in a tutor. But I do not see that in the present case the matter would be much mended, did he possess them. For what impression can a look, or the most emphatical threat be expected to make, where there is no power to make it good? The rod is out of the question. They are too old, though not too wise for that. Impositions, by way of penalty, are equally so, both because they are incapable of performing any, and because at their age, they may choose whether they will submit to them or not. The society may indeed expel them; and these hopeful youths have, it should seem, no great objection to their doing so. There are other academies ready to receive them; and which, because untried, they prefer to yours. They are therefore under no sufficient control, perfectly easy with respect to the consequences of their refractoriness, and of course set no bounds to their insolence. I do not assert it with confidence, but am much inclined to believe that an institution of this kind would succeed better, were the pupils admitted at a much earlier age. It could not indeed be hoped that all would be converted and become fit for the ministry. But having the advantage of spiritual ordinances, it is probable that some would, and the rest, at a proper age, having been soberly and well trained, might be sent out to serve society in some other capacity. But this is thrown out merely by the

way, for I already foresee that it would require a change in the whole plan.

I rather wonder that a man of so liberal a mind as Mr. Brewer should be so much hurt by your publication; and wonder no less that after having seen in it the reasons that influenced you to print it, he should express so much surprise and concern at its appearance. Was not your probity impeached when you were charged with interested motives for continuing in the church? and when the sincerity of your opinion respecting her ritual, discipline and order was called in question? But such is the influence of a denomination, that the most unprejudiced have yet a bias which in the long run discovers itself.

Poor Nat. Gee has disgraced his gray hairs.—He is suspended *ab officio*, and his eldest son says Amen for him. But I suppose William Peace has given you this piece of history, which I therefore needed not to have mentioned. He has probably told you too that Lady Austen is gone to Bath.

This fine May makes us amends for a doleful winter. The hot weather came on so fast, that there was not more than a week's interval between the nakedness of December and the full leaf. We are in good health, and always remember you and Mrs. Newton with sincere affection.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

June 5, 1784.

WHEN you told me that the critique upon my volume was written, though not by Dr. Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book and the business, I inferred from that expression that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favour, and consequently that he had a right to thanks. But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks which do not seem to be much called for. Yet even now were it possible that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied. I was no other way anxious about his opinion, nor could be so, after you and some others had given a favourable one, than it was natural I should be, knowing, as I did, that his opinion had been consulted.

I am affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. MATTHEW POWLEY, DEWSBURY, NEAR LEEDS [1].

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE read your Antiperfectionism both in folio and quarto with the closest attention I could give it, but being perfectly a stranger to this controversy, am but indifferently qualified to revise what you have written.

[1] This was the only letter of Cowper's remaining among the papers of Mr. Powley's widow, at her death, Nov. 9, 1835, in her eighty-ninth year.

I can truly say, however, that it pleased me both with respect to the matter and the manner. Your arguments appear to me conclusive, such as may be evaded perhaps, (for what arguments may not by a quibbling adversary?) but unanswerable on the grounds of Scripture, good sense, and candour. I observe, however, that a gentleman who saw your work in Yorkshire, and whose remarks upon it accompanied your books, is of opinion that your opponents do not contend for sinless perfection, as required by Scripture. It may be so; but if they do not, I am utterly at a loss to conceive what colour of plausibility they can give to their argument, or how they can defend it for a moment. It appears too by your quotations from their writings, of the fidelity of which I have no doubt, that, whether they can in reality derive it from Scripture or not, it is a point they very much labour, and at the expense of all honest and sound interpretation. I must therefore take it for granted that your friend misunderstands them in this respect; and if he does, I see no solid objection either to your plan or the execution of it. I have not had time to read their books, though I have hastily skimmed them over, and in doing so found sufficient reason to confirm me in the opinion I have just given of Mr. Atkinson's observation.

Whether it be advisable to publish or not is another question. That they do much mischief, and that unless they can be successfully opposed, they are likely to do much more, is certain. Your undertaking therefore is laudable, and if the seasonableness and expedience of it were the only points to be considered, every *friend* to truth and sound doctrine would advise you

by all means to print. But when I reflect how few readers you are likely to find,—how certain it is that the people principally concerned will be forbidden by Pope John to touch your volume,—that religious persons of your own opinions will perhaps have but little curiosity to see how you prove that to be erroneous which they are already persuaded is so,—and that the world at large care for none of these things, I cannot but fear lest your enterprise should prove an expensive one, and not meet with the success it deserves. You, however, who live where these points have been more agitated than in most other places, must be better qualified than I can possibly be to make an estimate of the probabilities for or against you; and to your judgement therefore I must leave them. I can only repeat what I said, that such a work seems very much wanted, and that, if it can find readers, yours seems to me exceedingly well calculated to answer the purpose.

I subjoin a few remarks I made as I passed along, which you will abide by or reject as you see good, and am, with Mrs. Unwin's love to you, my dear friend,

Your affectionate,

June 25, (1784.) WM. COWPER.

Instead of my notes, which are short, and not very important, I send you an extract from a letter I received last night from Mr. Newton, in answer to one in which I informed him of your design. If it should effect a change in your purpose, which I think not very unlikely, my comments will be of no use; if otherwise, I will transmit them to you on the first summons.

"I wish Mr. Powley's defence of the truth, or his antidote against error, may be very useful; but I own I seldom expect much good from controversial publications, though under some circumstances it is not easy to forbear. It is not pleasing to a minister to see false and hurtful notions sown amongst his hearers. Yet it must be so. The sowing of the wheat will give occasion to the sowing of the tares, and, except endeavours to pull up the tares are managed with a gentle hand, and with great wisdom, the wheat likewise will be hurt. Mr. Fletcher's sermon, which otherwise might ere long be forgotten, will be perpetuated by Mr. Powley's answer. Mr. Fletcher will be more talked of, more thought of, more read in and about Dewsbury. Mr. Powley's book will be read and approved by his own friends, who do not need it; while few of those for whom it is designed will or dare give it a fair perusal; and controversies are apt to betray both writers and readers into either an angry or self-approving spirit. I cannot easily expatiate on my neighbour's mistakes without admiring my own sagacity; therefore, had I been consulted, I should probably have advised Mr. Powley to go on speaking the truth in love, taking only a slight and occasional notice of what Mr. Anybody is pleased to do or teach; and so far as the Lord gives the truth entrance and hold in the hearts of his people, so far error will be effectually kept out; and it can be kept out this way only. We may persuade folks to like our system of notions, and the next preacher may persuade them to prefer his; but they whom the Lord persuades will not so readily part with what he has taught them."

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, July 3, 1784.

I WAS sorry that I could only take a flying leave of you. When the coach stopped at the door, I thought you had been in your chamber; my dishabille would not otherwise have prevented my running down for the sake of a more suitable parting.

We rejoice that you had a safe journey, and though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that, having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him. Let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary. It is rather strange that at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one; and stranger still that, being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine bard; and perhaps by a reperusal of some others, whose works we generally lay by at that period of life when we are best qualified to read them, when, the judgement and the taste being formed, their beauties are least likely to be overlooked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should have enjoyed the first fine morning I have

seen this month with a peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter, but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses, he is even jocular, and laughs; though considering that wheels, and miles, and grooms, were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provokes me still more by reasoning as he does on the justification of the tax upon candles. Some families, he says, will suffer little by it;—Why? Because they are so poor, that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened, an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery seems worthy of a hero; but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all; a commodity, being once made too expensive for their pockets, will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice, therefore, O ye pennyless! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but your remaining halfpenny will be safe; instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candlelight, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he would remember, that the halfpenny, which government imposes, the shopkeeper will swell to two-pence.

I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight. I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots and sedans in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card-tables. I wish, in short, that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous, is but to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the laborious to despair.

A neighbour of mine, in Silver End, keeps an ass; the ass lives on the other side of the garden wall, and I am writing in the green-house: it happens that he is this morning most musically disposed, either cheered by the fine weather, or by some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts and hinders me; but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse of my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 5, 1784.

A DEARTH of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part and must be uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present; and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation; during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigours of winter. This fine day, however, affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish, which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities that even a good understanding may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems, however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were

undoubtedly equal to our own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his Satires with an observation, that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus, and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader at the same time cause to suspect that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Eleusinian mysteries. Yet we know that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental advantages, were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense or nonsense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum

if, after advertising a month in the gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him or his measures so little as I do. When I say that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood that I would forfeit such a sum, if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But at the best, I fear, that he will have to say at last with Æneas,

Si Pergama dextrâ
Defendi possent, etiam hâc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The charge of ten shillings upon horses, considering that travellers were heavily charged before, appears to me unreasonable: and herein I must be at least disinterested, for I never ride. But the additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says indeed that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated it seems to amount to this,—"Make the necessaries of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; and if they buy none, the tax, as to them, will be annihilated." True. But, in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any; and will be but little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

Mr. Unwin left us on Wednesday. Mrs. Powley is with us, and begs to be remembered. Mr. Grindon is confined under a second stroke of the apoplexy, and is thought to be in danger. I enclose a letter to old Mr. Small, who has sent me some rhubard seed, for which I write to thank him, and shall be your debtor for a penny, by way of *viaticum*. Mrs. Unwin, except that she has a pain in her face, is well. I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrûm.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, July 12, 1784.

YOUR sister leaves us this evening; her journey will be on foot to Newport: your mother and I mean to accompany her as far as to the limits of our usual walk. The coach takes her up at five in the morning. It will be on both sides a sorrowful parting; the distance of the separation and the length of it will make it such. But this first part of the business is rather in danger of being disconcerted: the weather lowers and threatens to make a walk impracticable. How the ladies will settle it, therefore, as yet I know not, having seen neither of them this morning. Your sister desires me to thank you for the hint given to Miss

Unwin, for which she holds herself not the less indebted to you though it did not succeed.

You are going to Bristol. A lady, not long since our very near neighbour, is probably there: she *was* there very lately. If you should chance to fall into her company, remember, if you please, that we found the connexion on some accounts an inconvenient one, that we do not wish to renew it, and conduct yourself accordingly. A character with which we spend all our time should be made on purpose for us; too much or too little of any single ingredient spoils all: in the instance in question, the dissimilitude was too great not to be felt continually, and consequently made our intercourse unpleasant. We have reason, however, to believe that she has given up all thoughts of a return to Olney.

I think with you that Vinny's line is not pure. If he knew any authority that would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done well to have noted it in the margin. But I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes exposed to difficulties insurmountable by lawful means, whence I imagine was originally derived that indulgence that allows them the use of what is called the *poetica licentia*. But that liberty, I believe, contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in the quantity of a syllable, and never presumes to trespass upon grammatical propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows; but when I recollect the

English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Basia amatori tot tum permissa beato.

Or,

Basia quæ juveni indulsit Susanna beato
Navarcha optaret maximus esse sua.

The preceding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich, thus managed, will connect itself with them easily, and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen resemble the original so much. At some time or other you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression made by your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the time I hope will come when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last Review, but dipping into it, I accidentally fell upon their account of Hume's Essay on Suicide. I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author whom they so much admire:—I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands, as blind and presumptuous as himself. God certainly infatuates those who will not see. It were otherwise impossible, that a man, naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages

of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others with such palpable sophistry as has not even the grace of fallacy to recommend it. His silly assertion that because it would be no sin to divert the course of the Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also; for the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country, than the course of that river to the regions though which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions that dwell upon its banks to all generations. But the life of a man and the water of a river can never come into competition with each other in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher.

I thank you for your offer of the classics. When I want I will borrow. Horace is my own. Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years. They are the property of Mr. Jones. A Virgil, the property of Mr. Scott, I have had as long. I am nobody in the affair of tenses, unless when you are present.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We took leave of your sister at the George at Northampton on Wednesday evening last, having accompanied her thither in a chaise, with which we meant

to have treated her, but found on our return that, in spite of all our precaution, she had contrived to discharge it. The Leeds coach took her up the next morning, —I may properly say took her up, for it did not take her in;—being full, it afforded her no place but on the roof. There, however, she found a well behaved man, who promised to take care of her. This intelligence has been communicated to us in a note from our late servant, who lives at Northampton, and who slept with her at the inn. We hope that by this time she is safe and sound at Dewsbury, it being agreed by all who ever made the experiment, that the top of a coach is the safest situation about it, being farthest removed from the point of joltation, as a philosopher would say, and consequently the least affected by it.

I neither congratulate nor condole with you on account of your late acquisition of Mr. M——'s acquaintance. You have no great cause to be proud of it; his smiles are not so valuable now as they might have been thought before he commenced an author. In that character he has lost the most desirable connexions he had, and would have reason to think himself too happy if he could prevail with you to fill one of the vacant niches. He did not always court you as he does now, not because you were not always worthy of his attention, but because he was not always equally sensible of your value. The advantage, could he win you, would be all on his side; for which reason, I esteem it, as I said, no proper subject for congratulation; but then again, in consideration of your security, and because, although he angles for you very skillfully,

you will not bite, I do not account it an occasion of any anxiety or concern. You are chiefly to be pitied for the disagreeable sensations to which a conduct such as you will find it necessary to observe must unavoidably expose you. It is painful to a generous mind, when solicited and assailed with expressions of a warm affection, to be obliged to make an inadequate return, and to strain hard for a little show of civility, when cordiality seems to be called for. I can feel for you, because I know what I should feel in the same situation, and shall be glad to hear that you are handsomely rid of a business in which, though your prudence will guard you from being a loser, you have nothing to gain. I loved him once, but now I can only be sorry for him. Why will he kick against the thorns, and provoke a man so much his superior, (if I have any judgement in the subject,) both as a writer and a scholar, and especially as possessed of that ground of truth, virtue, good sense, and propriety, from which he cannot possibly be dislodged? Ignorance and impudence! Oh fie! the man is indisputably learned, and writes likes a gentleman.

I enclose a letter from Lady Austen, which I beg you to return to me in your next. Her sister was the bearer of it. We are reconciled. She seized the first opportunity to embrace your mother with tears of the tenderest affection, and I of course am satisfied. We were all a little awkward at first, but now are as easy as ever. She stays at Clifton till after Christmas. Having been obliged to communicate our disagreement, I give myself a release from that obligation of

secrecy, under which I am engaged with respect to her other letters, accounting this, indeed, no part of our correspondence.

I ask pardon for neglecting a subject on which you consulted me in your last. It is too much my practice to reply to a letter without reading it at the time, and on this occasion my memory failed me. I am no friend to Lily's Grammar, though I was indebted to him for my first introduction to the Latin language. The grammars used at Westminster, both for the Latin and the Greek, are those to which, if I had a young man to educate, I should give the preference. They have the merit of being compendious and perspicuous, in both which properties I judge Lily to be defective. If I am not mistaken, however, they are in use at the Charterhouse, so that I have no need to describe them to you. They are called Busby's Grammars, though Busby did not compose them. The compilation was a task imposed upon his uppermost boys, the plan only being drawn by the master, and the versification, which I have often admired for the ingenuity of it, being theirs. I never knew a boy of any abilities who had taken his notion of language from those grammars, that was not accurate to a degree that distinguished him from most others.

I am writing in the greenhouse for retirement sake, where I shiver with cold on this present third of July. Summer and winter therefore do not depend on the position of the sun with respect to the earth, but on His appointment who is sovereign in all things. Last Saturday night the cold was so severe, that it pinched off many of the young shoots of our peach-trees. The

nurseryman we deal with informs me that the wall-trees are almost every where cut off, and that a friend of his near London has lost all the full-grown fruit-trees of an extensive garden. The very walnuts, which are now no bigger than small hazel-nuts, drop to the ground; and the flowers, though they blow, seem to have lost their odours. I walked with your mother yesterday in the garden, wrapped up in a winter surtout, and found myself not at all encumbered by it; not more, indeed, than I was in January. Cucumbers contract that spot which is seldom found upon them except late in the autumn, and melons hardly grow: it is a comfort however to reflect that if we cannot have these fruits in perfection, neither do we want them. Our crops of wheat are said to be very indifferent, the stalks of an unequal height, so that some of the ears are in danger of being smothered by the rest, and the ears in general lean and scanty. I never knew a summer in which we had not now and then a cold day to conflict with, but such a wintry fortnight as the last, at this season of the year, I never remember. I fear you have made a discovery of the webs you mentioned a day too late. The vermin have probably by this time left them, and may laugh at all human attempts to destroy them; for every web they have hung upon the trees and bushes this year, you will probably next year find fifty, perhaps a hundred: their increase is almost infinite; so that if Providence does not interfere, and man sees fit to neglect them, the laughers you mention may live to be sensible of their mistake. Love to all.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

THE last four days have been days of adventure, teeming with incidents in which the opposite ingredients of pain and pleasure have been plentifully mingled, and of the most interesting kind. Lady Austen's behaviour to us ever since her return to Clifton has been such as to engage our affections to her more than ever. A flood, indeed, has sometimes parted us for many days; but though it has often been impossible for us, who never ride to visit *her*, as soon as the water has become fordable by an ass, she has mounted one, and visited *us*. On Thursday last, in the evening, she came down with her sister to the evening lecture. She had not been long seated in her pew before she was attacked by the most excruciating pains of bilious colic: having much resolution, however, and being determined not to alarm her sister, the congregation, or the minister, she bore it without discovering much of what she felt even to Mrs. Jones till the service was over. It is a disorder to which she has lately been very subject. We were just sitting down to supper, when a hasty rap alarmed us. I ran to the hall window, for the hares being loose, it was impossible to open the door. The evening had been a dismal one, raining almost continually, but just at that time it held up. I entreated Mrs. Jones to go round to the gate, and, understanding by her tremulous voice that something distressful was at hand, made haste to meet her. I had no sooner reached the yard-door, and opened it, than Lady Austen appeared leaning upon Mr. Scott.

She could not speak, but thrusting her other arm under mine, with much difficulty made shift to attain the great chair by the fireside in the parlour: there she suffered unutterable anguish for a considerable time, till at length, by your mother's application and assistance, being a little relieved, she contrived to climb the staircase, and after about three hours agony was put to bed. At eleven at night we sent off a messenger to Northampton, who returned at seven the next morning, and brought a physician with him. He prescribed, and she was better. Friday night she slept tolerably, rose cheerful, and entertained us all Saturday with much agreeable conversation as usual; but her spirits being too great for her strength, the consequence was a frightful hysteric fit, which seized her just as she was going to bed. She was alone, for her sister had been obliged to go home; and thinking there was no need of such a precaution, she would have nobody else to sleep with her. The appointed signal was, that she should knock if she wanted any thing. She did so; your mother hastened to the chamber, and I after her to know if I could be of any use. She had not begun to undress, so I was admitted; and soon after her disorder became quite convulsive, accompanied with most of the symptoms of the most violent fits of that sort I have ever seen. In about an hour she grew better, rested tolerably, and was in good spirits on Sunday, and last night well enough to return to Clifton upon the ass. To-day we dine there.

Are you curious to know her sentiments of *you?* The question has, no doubt, excited your curiosity if

you had none before. Suppose, however, I postpone the gratification of it, and make it part of my next letter, finishing this with something more important? No; you must be satisfied this moment: no man that merits the good opinion of others can be indifferent to it. You shall then.

She would have known you for your mother's son the moment she saw you, had you not been announced by name. This is some praise, let me tell you, especially from her, who thinks that mother the best of women, and loves her at least as much as if she were her own. Your figure the most elegant she ever saw,—no longer complain of calfless legs, and a belly with nothing in it!—your countenance quite handsome,—no longer be ashamed of a nose you have sometimes thought too long!—every motion of your limbs, your action, your attitude, bespeak the gentleman;—added to all this, your vivacity and your good sense, together with an amiable disposition, which she is sure you possess, though she has but an hour's knowledge of you, have placed you so high in her esteem, that had you an opportunity to cultivate an interest there, you would soon be without a rival. Fourteen years ago I would not have made you this relation; such a stripling as you were at that time would have been spoiled by so much praise, and through the mere hunger after more would have lost what he had acquired already; but being the father of a family, and the minister of three parishes, I am not afraid to trust you with it. I beg Mrs. Unwin will add a short postscript to your next, just to inform me whether, when you perused this picture of yourself, you blushed, and how often. I

had almost forgot what she desired me to insert, that she wishes as much for a Mr. Unwin here, as you can possibly for a Lady Austen at Stock.

Notwithstanding the uncommon rigour of the season, much of our wheat is carried, and in good condition. It does not appear that the murmurings of the farmers were with any reason: the corn has suffered much less by mildew than was reported; and if it is at all injured, (in this part of the world at least,) it must be ascribed to their foolish impatience, who *would* cut it down too soon. It is so cold this 27th of August that I shake in the greenhouse where I am writing.

Our united love attends you all. Your letter is gone to Dewsbury.

Yours, my dear William,

WM. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 19, 1784.

NOTWITHSTANDING the justness of the comparison by which you illustrate the folly and wickedness of a congregation assembled to pay divine honours to the memory of Handel, I could not help laughing at the picture you have drawn of the musical convicts. The subject indeed is awful, and your manner of representing it is perfectly just; yet I laughed, and must have laughed had I been one of your hearers. But the ridicule lies in the preposterous conduct which you reprove, and not in your reproof of it. A people so musically mad as to make not only their future trial the subject of a concert, but even the message of

mercy from their King, and the only one he will ever send them, must excuse me if I am merry where there is more cause to be sad; for melancholy as their condition is, their behaviour under it is too ludicrous not to be felt as such, and would conquer even a more settled gravity than mine.

In those days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday ramblers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them had such a humorous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences:

Sunt res humanæ flebile ludibrium.

An instance of this deplorable merriment has occurred in the course of last week at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking. Lucy and his wife, and two women whose name is Hine, relations of the glazier, went in a covered cart to Woolaston, to partake of the anniversary merry-making at that place. Having spent the day, no doubt, very agreeably, they got into their tumbril, expecting nothing but they should soon be safe at home again. Some geese were in the horse-path, and in danger of being run over. Lucy waved his hat to scare them, forgetting that his horse might possibly be frighted too. He was

so, and ran away. On one side of the road was a steep declivity, where two women were killed by an overturn about two years ago: fearing the same fate, and the women screaming and clinging about him in such a manner that he was unable to guide his horse, Lucy gave him a sudden and violent twitch to the other side. In a moment, running as he did at full speed, he dashed himself and the cart against a wall: the force of the shock threw him and broke all his harness, a circumstance without which not a single life would have been saved. Lucy received a violent contusion on his head, and his legs were terribly torn. One of the women had her arm broken and her wrist dislocated; the other was only bruised: but Mrs. Lucy was the greatest sufferer, having her scull fractured, and one side of her face with half her scalp so completely separated from the bone, that when her husband went to take her up, he mistook the loose flesh for the cushion she wore upon her head. The story is almost too shocking to be related, but having begun it I could not choose whether I would finish it or not. She is, however, alive, and is attended at Woolaston, from which place she could not be removed, by Dr. Kerr. I heard yesterday that there were hopes of her recovery, which is the more wonderful as she is with child. So dangerous it is to all, and so fatal to some, to forget that we are not introduced into this world merely to amuse ourselves for a few years as well as we can, and then to pass out of it unnoticed by Him who sent us.

About a month since I had a letter from one whom you remember, and from whom I little expected to

hear,—James Nichols. He wrote to enquire after his old connexions at Olney, particularly after Nelly Langton, desiring to be informed of all that has happened here; how many births, deaths, and marriages, I suppose, have taken place at Olney since he left it: but I have not answered him, neither do I intend it. He says much about the Lord and his dealings with him; but I have long considered James as a sort of pedler and hawker in these matters, rather than as a creditable and substantial merchant. He is now a mason's labourer at Ostend, and when he wrote had just received a hurt in his leg by a fall from the top of a ladder.

Remember us as we remember you; that is, with undiminished friendship and affection.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 28, 1784.

I MAY perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine; to the best of my remembrance, about three miles distance from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock; at least you might have done so

twenty years ago. But since that time I think it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will; perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope, that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him as a biographer. But as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the deaths of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems, however, a step towards the truth, to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not Providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me, for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind my friendship for you indeed is

as warm as ever. But I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones are promised me, and when I see them I shall rejoice. In the meantime my faith in the assurances of my friends is too weak to be productive of any thing like joy. My sensations upon such occasions are rather like those of poor old Tantalus, if he be still where the poets placed him.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other, whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved, I suppose, to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which, unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

We heartily wish that the sea-bathing may be of use to Eliza: I have known it serviceable in similar cases. Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately; but I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Grindon died soon after I had informed you of his illness: his son succeeds him. We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W. C. AND M. U.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 14, 1784.

I GIVE you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured skulls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road,—thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security! Having, no doubt, their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure, they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no further. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honeysuckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned. I hear that Mr. Throckmorton is making another balloon, a paper one, containing sixteen quires.

hear,—James Nichols. He wrote to enquire after his old connexions at Olney, particularly after Nelly Langton, desiring to be informed of all that has happened here; how many births, deaths, and marriages, I suppose, have taken place at Olney since he left it: but I have not answered him, neither do I intend it. He says much about the Lord and his dealings with him; but I have long considered James as a sort of pedler and hawker in these matters, rather than as a creditable and substantial merchant. He is now a mason's labourer at Ostend, and when he wrote had just received a hurt in his leg by a fall from the top of a ladder.

Remember us as we remember you; that is, with undiminished friendship and affection.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July 28, 1784.

I MAY perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine; to the best of my remembrance, about three miles distance from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock; at least you might have done so

twenty years ago. But since that time I think it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will; perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope, that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him as a biographer. But as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the deaths of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems, however, a step towards the truth, to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not Providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me, for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind my friendship for you indeed is

as warm as ever. But I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones are promised me, and when I see them I shall rejoice. In the meantime my faith in the assurances of my friends is too weak to be productive of any thing like joy. My sensations upon such occasions are rather like those of poor old Tantalus, if he be still where the poets placed him.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other, whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved, I suppose, to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which, unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

We heartily wish that the sea-bathing may be of use to Eliza: I have known it serviceable in similar cases. Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately; but I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Grindon died soon after I had informed you of his illness: his son succeeds him. We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W. C. AND M. U.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 14, 1784.

I GIVE you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured skulls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road,—thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security! Having, no doubt, their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure, they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no further. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honeysuckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned. I hear that Mr. Throckmorton is making another balloon, a paper one, containing sixteen quires.

It is to fly upon the wings of ignited spirits, and will therefore, I suppose, be sent up at night. I take it for granted that we shall be invited to the spectacle; but whether we shall have the courage to expose ourselves to the inconveniences of a nocturnal visit, is at present doubtful.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific Ocean. In our last night's lecture we were made acquainted with the island of Hapaee, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way; and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled, by savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this, however, have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion they might even be our masters! How wonderful too, that with a tub and a stick they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the sweetest music cannot but hear with pleasure! Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character, that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other, and their opportunities of improvement much the same; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance; while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with

the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation, and often entertain me even while I am not employed in reading them.

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can to my new production; and in transcribing it I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare, unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however is not so unproductive of subjects for censure, but that it may possibly supply me with some other that may serve as well.

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to write, an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

Heu quot amatores nunc torquet epistola rara!
Vectigal certum, perituraque gratia FRANKI!

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 16, 1784.

HAD you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place, and the amusements it affords, I should have had more modesty than to suppose myself capable of adding

any thing to your present entertainments worthy to rank with them. I am not however totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mignonette, which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant: and if I have not a hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a greenhouse,— a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he: nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment and speculation as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up a balloon from Emberton meadow. Thrice it rose, and as oft descended; and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up, and came down no more. Like the arrow discharged at the pigeon in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air, and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the soothsayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the most bloody war that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last voyage, and am much pleased and amused with it. It seems that in some of the Friendly isles, they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. O! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage. The paper indeed tells us that the queen of France has clapped this king of capers up in prison,

for declining to dance before her, on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was in perfect health. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think that the durance he suffers would be well exchanged for a dance at Anamooka. I should however as little have expected to hear that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art, that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians and astronomers. Defective as they are in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refinement, it seems wonderful that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance, which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude therefore that particular nations have a genius for particular feats; and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South Sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs. Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr. Gilpin at her brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad that Mrs. Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope that Eliza is better. You will learn from this letter that we are so, and that for my own part I am not quite so low in spirits as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am

Your affectionate friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August.

If the heat of the weather at London is such as it is here, and you are now employed in writing, you will find it hard work; though a reaper who stoops with his nose within an inch of his sickle all the day, would envy both you and me, and think us but laborious triflers at the best.

Mr. Teedon has received your kind and seasonable donation at two payments; two guineas before your remittance came, and the remainder in Weston Field. We met him there just after we had with difficulty dragged ourselves up that steep and close lane, and were not a little fearful that his honest but rather verbose expressions of gratitude would cost us both a sore throat,—our pores standing wide open for the reception of an east wind, which blew rather sharp over the top of the hill.

You have seen Mr. Ashburner, and are consequently in possession of the history of the Warrington pew: it is difficult to say at present what will be the contents of the next chapter, but the conclusion is likely to prove disastrous to Mr. Page, and not more favourable to his friend Mr. Smith; for by the best information we can procure, the latter gentleman having omitted to take the opinion of a vestry, (deeming it, I suppose, an idle ceremony, not worthy the attention of a churchwarden acting upon his liberal and enlarged plan) has mortally offended the principal parishioners, who are determined that he and his principal shall pay for the alteration; a resolution in

which, without doubt, they will be warranted by the law. A mind accustomed to reflection may derive a lesson from almost every incident that occurs; and the lesson to be derived from this seems to be, that the peace of that parish is sure to be disturbed, and not likely to be soon restored, that is burthened with a quarrelsome curate and a meddlesome churchwarden.

It is natural before the winter is half over to wish for the return of spring; but we shall wish for the next spring with unusual ardour.

Cætera desunt.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, Sept. 11, 1784.

I AM obliged to you for a plentiful supply of franks, and hope that you have not been inattentive to my interests upon the occasion, but have furnished yourself with an equal number bearing my address. You have my thanks also for the inquiries you have made upon the subject of male rumps corked. Despairing however of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode, as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping, by the end of the month, to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Leman Street; but must beg that you will give me in your next an

exact direction, that it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake; for though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiæ of which I have made none: it is besides slavish work, and of all occupations that which I dislike the most. I know that you will lose no time in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in conveying it to Johnson, that if he chooses to print it, it may go to the press immediately; if not, that it may be offered directly to your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum populi* than the former. I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to three thousand two hundred and seventy-six. I imagine therefore that the whole contains about five thousand. I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another letter.

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. Venn, whom I had not seen many years. He introduced himself to me very politely, with many thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last production. He said that one passage in particular

had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it is a most innocent one, and partakes not in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He, who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Our connexion with the Westonites is much in *statu quo*. We frequently meet, and are always most perfectly polite. Last week we encountered the whole family in the evening. Mr. Throckmorton said that he should send up a balloon in half an hour, and that if we had any curiosity to see it, and would step home with him, by the time we had drank a dish of tea, it would be ready to mount. At this time, however, it was beginning to be dark, and being well assured that the delay would be longer than he supposed, we excused ourselves on account of the late hour; in fact, we should have had two miles to walk between

ten and eleven o'clock at night, which would not have suited either of us. We expect, however, to be invited to a daylight exhibition of the same kind on Tuesday. He has sent us partridges and a hare.

Yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 11, 1784.

I HAVE never seen Dr. Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me, nor did I know, till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his Visions. I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him, as to be pious and sensible, and I believe no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgement of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected in his mind with the firm belief of an Omnipotent agent. Yours, &c.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 18, 1784.

FOLLOWING your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease till I have spoiled

it. I have sent you many a sheet that in my judgement of it has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser; a saying literally fulfilled to the reader of my epistles.

My greenhouse is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in summer; when, the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful,—at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing; but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except

always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-yard, is no bad performer; and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble, to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits:—and if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel, are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in Heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found;

tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours,

Sum ut semper, tui studiosissimus,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 2, 1784.

A POET can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it time enough to give it a leisurely reading before you go to town; which whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain. I have the whole punctuation to settle, which in blank verse is of the last importance, and of a species peculiar to that composition; for I know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints and notices, to regulate the inflections, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair that in spite of grammarians must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris;* for I suppose every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you will have it on Saturday the ninth. But this is more than I expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh, in which case it will not reach you

till the thirteenth. I rather think, that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe. Add to this, that in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work. The motto of the whole is—*Fit surculus arbor.* If you can put the author's name under it, do so;—if not, it must go without one, for I know not to whom to ascribe it. It was a motto taken by a certain prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but, as I think, to a medal.

Mr. ——— is a Cornish member; but for what place in Cornwall I know not. All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it;—but he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again. He was in company with Mr. Throckmorton. With that gentleman we drank chocolate, since I wrote last. The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon. Your mother invited her, and I him, and they promised to return the visit, but have not yet performed. *Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest, Mrs. W———. She was driven to the door by her son, a boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous expression, and should what I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators. Be it known therefore to the Alduses and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm that Mrs. W——— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed that she was ever

there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be, with propriety, said to be Lilliputian.

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller are to settle the conveyance of proofs sheets hither, and back again. They must travel I imagine by coach, a large quantity of them at a time; for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal.

We love you all, jointly and separately, as usual.

W. C.

I have not seen, nor shall see, the Dissenter's answer to Mr. Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, October 9, 1784.

THE pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expense with which it was threatened, convincing me that my letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality. You complain of unconnected thoughts. I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries, and as honest as yours. The description of your meditations at least suits mine: perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground, and assert with the strictest truth that I not only do not

think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all. I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way; for when I ask myself what was the last idea, (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy what was the last word), I am not able to answer, but, like the boy in question, am obliged to stare and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, *messieurs les philosophes*, there are moments, when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought, and the consciousness of it, seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however we may both be right; and if you will grant me that I do not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing that though the soul be in herself, as you say, an active principle, the influence of her present union with a principle that is not such, makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliquium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly, and without disguise; you must therefore either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act, or deny that mine is a human soul; and though I be sometimes more than half of that opinion myself, it is a negative which I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I little thought of being engaged in to-day.

Last night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprize me of the safe arrival of Cook's last voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in Saint James's Square. He writes, however, from Sandwell. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation however forced itself upon me with more violence than one, that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favour was converted into an opposition, that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any that had preceded it. When he departed he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well disposed to serve him. At his return he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been restored, was magnified into an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing, in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice, or see, that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure; but a mind I think in any degree spiritual cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the

opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know that even in a sensible man it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so, that he was in sport:—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or a stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptized man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honours to be paid him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege[1].

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions. I have not left myself room to say any thing of the love we feel for you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

[1] Having enjoyed, in the year 1772, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious seaman, on board his own ship, the Resolution, I cannot pass the present letter without observing, that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook, in the affair alluded to. From the little personal acquaintance, which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted, under any circumstances, with such impious arrogance, as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty.—*Hayley.*

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 10, 1784.

I SEND you four quires of verse, which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of, till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness: it were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one, and only one compliment, which was so justly due, that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion;—I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton,—but the compliment I mean is to Mr. Smith. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and

you, to whom I disclose the secret; a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons; first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance, —and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature: not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience: not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I have varied as much as I could, (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string,) I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible,) it may yet boast, that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency; to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 20, 1784.

YOUR letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith in your judgement, and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem is a serious business; and the author must know little of his own heart, who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production; and who is he that would not be mortified by the discovery, that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem however which you have in hand will not of itself make a volume so large as the last, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since, I began a piece which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question, whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean that it shall pursue the track of the former,—that is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe

it to you. But you must see it first; and if, after having seen it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the tittle of an *i*, I will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show, that though I write generally with a serious intention, I know how to be occasionally merry. The Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation: but in this article I am entirely under your judgement, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece which now employs me, is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank. It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If, when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the ceiling and cry—"Humph!"—anticipate him (I beseech you) at once, by saying—"that you know I should be sorry that he should undertake for me to his own disadvantage, or that my volume should be in any degree pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely because I think he would have reason to complain of me, if I did not."—But that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand from you that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will

consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them. The idea of being hawked about, and especially of your being the hawker, is insupportable. Nichols (I have heard) is the most learned printer of the present day. He may be a man of taste as well as of learning; and I suppose that you would not want a gentleman usher to introduce you. He prints the Gentleman's Magazine, and may serve us, if the others should decline; if not, give yourself no farther trouble about the matter. I may possibly envy authors, who can afford to publish at their own expense, and in that case should write no more. But the mortification would not break my heart.

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order.

Page 140.—Truth generally, without the article *the*, would not be sufficiently defined. There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, &c.; and a reader, not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly, and indeed easily doubt what truth was particularly intended. I acknowledge that *grace*, in my use of the word, does not often occur in poetry. So neither does the subject which I handle. Every subject has its own terms, and religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the Scripture: thence I take the word *grace*. The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially as God's favour in the abstract has no other word, in all our language, by which it can be expressed.

Page 150.—*Impress the mind faintly, or not at all.*—I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run

of it, having always observed that a little unevenness of this sort, in a long work, has a good effect,—used, I mean, sparingly, and with discretion.

Page 127.—This should have been noted first, but was overlooked.

My sentiments on the subject of Charles's decollation are peculiar; at least I believe they are so. I think it was a good deed, but ill done; that his life was forfeited, but taken away upon wrong motives. But my notions being peculiar are for that reason better suppressed, and I am indebted to you for the hint. Be pleased therefore to alter for me thus, with the difference of only one word from the alteration proposed by you,—

> We too are friends to royalty. We love
> The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
> And reigns content within them.

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently snails, and all reptiles that spoil our crops, either of fruit, or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure, that Mrs. Unwin so readily understood me. Blank verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity,—must rather be singularly perspicuous,—to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour, and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose that I have

great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess which the whole strain of Scripture calls upon us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

In the introduction to the art of cucumber-raising, in the third book, I might beg you to substitute gnats for fleas. I need not tell you why.

Your mother also has had a letter from Mrs. Powley, in which she gives a particular account of her illness, and of the consolation she received in the course of it. It was equally refreshing to your mother, who, upon the strength of such pleasing evidence of her interest in a better world, could have made a cheerful surrender of her into the hands of her heavenly Father, had he seen good to take her.

We have to trouble you yet once again in the marketing way. I want a yard of green satin, to front a winter under waistcoat, and your mother a pound of prepared hartshorn. Being tolerably honest folks, it is probable that we shall some time or other pay you all our debts. These and the cream-pot may all come together by the waggon.

I can easily see that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *Alma Mater*, and I have banged her too. Lay yourself therefore under no constraints that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly *free*.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewell. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu!

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 30, 1784.

I ACCEDE most readily to the justness of your remark on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich islanders. Proofs of such prowess I believe are seldom exhibited by a people who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement and profligacy of principle are too nearly allied, to admit of any thing so noble; and I question whether any instances of faithful friendship, like that which so much affected you in the behaviour of the poor savage, were produced even by the Romans themselves, in the latter days of the empire. They *had* been a nation whose virtues it is impossible not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them, what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower. Religion in this case seems pretty much out of the question. To the production of such heroism, undebauched nature herself is equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God than her cicisbèos and her fiddlers know now; and indeed it seems a matter of indifference, whether a man be born under a truth which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie: or if there be any difference between the two cases, it seems to be rather in favour of the

latter; for a false persuasion, (such as the Mahometan for instance,) may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly we see a Sandwich islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being impressed by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty that will disgrace them for ever; for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am now reading a book which you have never read, and will probably never read—Knox's Essays. Perhaps I should premise, that I am driven to such reading by the want of books that would please me better, neither having any, nor the means of procuring any. I am not sorry, however, that I have met with him; though when I have allowed him the praise of being a sensible man, and in *his* way a good one, I have allowed him all that I can afford. Neither his style pleases me, which is sometimes insufferably dry and hard, and sometimes ornamented even to an Harveian tawdriness; nor his manner, which is never lively without being the worse for it: so unhappy is he in his attempts at character and narration. But writing chiefly on the manners, vices, and follies of the modern day, to me he is at least so far useful, as that he gives me information upon points concerning which I neither *can* nor *would* be informed except by hearsay. Of such information, however, I have need,

being a writer upon those subjects myself, and a satirical writer too. It is fit, therefore, in order that I may find fault in the right place, that I should know where fault may properly be found.

I am again at Johnson's in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books, and called The Task. I began it about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller I suppose will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocuses shall peep together. You may assure yourself that I shall take my first opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my Muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend! we are well, and love you.

Yours, and Mrs. Newton's,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 1, 1784.

WERE I to delay my answer, I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling, as I do, a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad for your sake, as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and that the first

trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine, as an argument that at least he was no loser by the former; I collect from it some reasonable hope that the volume in question may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me, (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions,) that your heart fluttered when you approached his door, and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen when you came out again. You did well to mention it at the Thorntons; they will now know that you do not pretend to a share in my confidence, whatever be the value of it, greater than you actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post, to inform him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised, and perhaps not pleased: but I think he cannot complain, for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least degree injured by his reserve; neither should I, were he to publish a whole library without favouring me with any previous notice of his intentions. In these cases it is no violation of the laws of friendship not to communicate, though there must be a friendship where the communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work a secret, and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me,—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating from your mind any little weeds of suspicion, that might still remain *in it,* that any man living is nearer to me than your-

self. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an inviolable closeness to the last; and the first news that either you or any of my friends would have had of the Task, they would have received from the public papers. But you know now, that neither as poet, nor as man, do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expense.

I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of Tirocinium) as fast as the Muse permits. It has reached the length of seven hundred lines, and will probably receive an addition of two or three hundred more. When you see Mr. Smith, perhaps you will not find it difficult to procure from him half a dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case, they will all go to the post filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried; and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry that John Gilpin, though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him, the language in some places not being quite so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be; and in one of the stanzas there is a false rhyme. When I have thus given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him with two mottoes, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they

will perhaps understand as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles. Knox, in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not, I think, fewer than half a dozen to his Essays.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY GOOD FRIEND, Nov. 8, 1784.

THE Task, as you know, is gone to the press: since it went I have been employed in writing another poem, which I am now transcribing, and which, in a short time, I design shall follow. It is intituled, Tirocinium, or a Review of Schools: the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them, especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home a domestic tutor where it is not; and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man as he to whom I am writing; some rural parson, whose attention is limited to a few.

Now what want I?—A motto. I have taken mottoes from Virgil and Horace till I begin to fear lest the world should discover (what indeed is the case) that I have no other authors of the Roman class. Find me one therefore in any of your multitudinous volumes, *no matter* whether it be taken from Burgersdicius,

Bogtrottius or Puddengulpius; the more recondite the better, the world will suppose that at least I am familiar with the author whom I quote, and though the supposition will be an erroneous one, it will do them no harm, and me some good.

When you have found it, bring it with you, either to-morrow, Saturday, or Monday. One of those three days you and your son must dine with us. Choose, and let us know which you choose, in an answer by the bearer.

Yours, with our joint love to Mrs. Bull,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 1784.

To condole with you on the death of a mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd; rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable, and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine in this respect have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world: mine, dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long; and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say, that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day,) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so

short. But the ways of God are equal;—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn, that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen, but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me indeed a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter, or early in the spring. You will find it perhaps on the whole more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a poem, in six books, called the Task. To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, Tirocinium, on the subject of education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Nov. 20, 1784.

THE Tirocinium kisses your hands. I changed my mind about mottoes to John Gilpin. I feared that the world might not understand me; and then, instead of

thinking me witty, they might have called me foolish. Tiro, too, in consideration of the subject, actually required a learned embellishment of that sort. You will observe that mine is learned indeed. My neighbour, Mr. Bull, furnished me with it, for I have no such writers as are pressed into my service for this purpose in all my library; I had worn out Horace and Virgil before. N. B. He never saw a line of the poem.

I do not think that drinkers, gamesters, fornicators, lewd talkers, and profane jesters,—men, in short, of no principles either religious or moral,—(and such we know are the majority of those sent out by our Universities,) *can* be dishonoured by a comparison with any thing on this side Erebus. I do not, therefore, repent of my frogs.

When I first knew Cambridge, I know that Benet had a character: it was my father's principal inducement when he chose that college for my brother; a slight alteration therefore may be sufficient, and by substituting *was* for *is* the matter may be accommodated. As thus,

> He graced a college in which order yet
> *Was* sacred.

And indeed it stands so in the foul copy.

The following short drama will, I think, set the musical business in so clear a light that you will no longer doubt the propriety of the censure.

Scene opens, and discovers the Abbey filled with Hearers and Performers. An ANGEL *descends into the midst of them.*

Angel. What are you about?
Answer. Commemorating Handel.

Angel. What is a commemoration?

Answer. A ceremony instituted in honour of him whom we commemorate.

Angel. But you sing anthems?

Answer. Yes, because he composed them.

Angel. And Italian airs?

Answer. Yes, and for the same reason.

Angel. So then because Handel set anthems to music, you sing them in honour of Handel; and because he composed the music of Italian songs, you sing them in a church. Truly Handel is much obliged to you, but God is greatly dishonoured.

[*Exit* ANGEL, *and the music proceeds without further impediment.*

A letter arrived last night from Yorkshire, begun by Mrs. Powley, but finished by her husband. She has had a return of her nervous disorder, but the physician does not apprehend her to be in any danger. Her frame of mind is happy and spiritual, full of thankfulness, praise, and confidence.

I cannot immediately recollect the exsputory lines, and have not leisure to look for them.

The parcel, if you please, by the Diligence. Thanks.

Lady A. is neither returned nor returnable: she has taken a house at Bristol, and furnished it.

Adieu. Yours,

WM. COWPER.

You will find also an epistle to Joseph Hill, Esq., which I wrote on Wednesday last; a tribute so due that I must have disgraced myself had I not paid it. He ever serves me in all that he can, though he has not seen me these twenty years.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 27, 1784.

ALL the interest that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard; of a friendship, in which distance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it, as a certain truth, that whatever seeming defects, in point of attention and attachment to you, my conduct on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with, I am in reality as clear of all real ones as you would wish to find me.

I send you enclosed, in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for my title, not otherwise easily accounted for;—secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my matter, though the tenons and mortises, by which the several passages are connected, and let into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus;—and lastly, an extract, as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you; and as I have admitted into my description no images but what are scriptural, and have aimed as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of the scripture language, I have the

manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But the subjects being so various, no single passage can in all respects be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such poetical embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him. Subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favour of a metropolis, that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants: and collaterally, and as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity, and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the Universities. A letter which appeared in the General Evening Post of Saturday, said to have been received by a general officer, and by him sent to the press, as worthy of public notice, and which has all the appearance of authenticity, would alone justify the severest censure of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject, I have added a poem, called Tirocinium, which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline, that obtains in almost all schools universally, but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals, that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father, where there is no real impediment; the expedient of a domestic tutor, where there is; and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman, who limits his attention to two, in all

cases where they cannot be conveniently educated at home. Mr. Unwin happily affording me an instance in point, the poem is inscribed to him. You will now I hope command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, till dinner comes. That piecemeal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to the work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that, I dare say, you will waive your desire of it. A poem, thus disjointed, cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule—"*Nulla dies sine lineâ*"—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it so rigidly, that though more than once I found three lines as many as I had time to compass, still I wrote; and finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance of one day made me amends for the barrenness of another. But I do not mean to write blank verse again. Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you, and to Mr. Bacon, for your kind remembrance of me when you meet. No artist can excel as he does, without the finest feelings; and every man that has the finest feelings is, and must be, amiable.

Adieu, my dear friend!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, 1784.

THE slice which, you observe, has been taken from the top of the sheet, it lost before I began to write; but being a part of the paper which is seldom used, I thought it would be pity to discard, or to degrade to meaner purposes, the fair and ample remnant, on account of so immaterial a defect. I therefore have destined it to be the vehicle of a letter, which you will accept as entire, though a lawyer perhaps would, without much difficulty, prove it to be but a fragment. The best recompense I can make you for writing without a frank is, to propose it to you to take your revenge by returning an answer under the same predicament; and the best reason I can give for doing it is the occasion following. In my last I recommended it to you to procure franks for the conveyance of Tirocinium, dated on a day therein mentioned, and the earliest, which at that time I could venture to appoint. It has happened, however, that the poem is finished a month sooner than I expected, and two-thirds of it are at this moment fairly transcribed; an accident to which the riders of a Parnassian steed are liable, who never know, before they mount him, at what rate he will choose to travel. If he be indisposed to dispatch, it is impossible to accelerate his pace; if otherwise, equally impossible to stop him. Therefore my errand to you at this time is to cancel the former assignation, and to inform you that by whatever means you please, and as soon as you please, the piece in question will *be ready to* attend you; for without exerting any

extraordinary diligence, I shall have completed the transcript in a week.

The critics will never know that four lines of it were composed while I had an ounce and a half of ipecacuanha upon my stomach, and a wooden vessel called a pail between my knees; and that in the very article, ——in short, that I was delivered of the emetic and the verses in the same moment. Knew they this, they would at least allow me to be a poet of singular industry, and confess that I lose no time. I have heard of poets, who have found cathartics of sovereign use, when they had occasion to be particularly brilliant. Dryden always used them, and in commemoration of it, Bayes in the Rehearsal is made to inform the audience, that in a poetical emergency he always had recourse to stewed prunes. But I am the only poet who has dared to reverse the prescription, and whose enterprise, having succeeded to admiration, warrants him to recommend an emetic to all future bards, as the most infallible means of producing a fluent and easy versification.

Your mother is well, and desires me to give her love to you. Nothing more has passed between us and the Throckmortons, except that lately, when they drew the river, they presented us with a fine jack. The ways are now growing dirty, and our pilgrimages to Weston will of course become less frequent. It is not likely therefore, at present, that our acquaintance with them should increase.

My love to all your family Adieu!

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 29, 1784.

I AM happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not, at least, disgust the public. For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause for being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event, and accounting it no violation of truth to assert *that* as true to-day which will be so to-morrow. It is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now is to give you information on the following subject: The moment Mr. Newton knew, (and I took care that he should learn it first from me,) that I had communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmur of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing, however, that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an

extract, by way of specimen, or, (which he should like better still,) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons, (but especially because I would no more show my poem piecemeal, than I would my house if I had one; the merits of the structure, in either case, being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it,) I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof-sheets I have absolutely, though civilly, refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work; and to these I have added an extract as he desired; selecting, as most suited to his taste,—The view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *à merveille*. We not only approve, but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favourable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture,

I can fancy that I see in him that good sense and courage that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 11, 1784.

HAVING imitated no man, I may reasonably hope that I shall not incur the disadvantage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar. So is Thomson's. He that should write like either of them, would, in my judgement, deserve the name of a copyist, but not of a poet. A judicious and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs, but will rather consider what it is in itself. Blank verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner, than verse in rhyme: and why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly it was not necessity that compelled them to it. I flatter myself however that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me to nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible that, as the reviewer of my former volume found cause to say that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the reviewer of this, whosoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and

more prone to fear and despond, than to overrate my own productions, I am persuaded that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume that I gained by the last.

As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book, including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case, it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident that gave birth to the poem; nor does it appear to me, that because I performed more than my task, therefore the Task is not a suitable title. A house would still be a house, though the builder of it should make it ten times as big as he at first intended. I might indeed, following the example of the Sunday newsmonger, call it the Olio. But I should do myself wrong; for though it have much variety, it has, I trust, no confusion.

For the same reason none of the interior titles apply themselves to the contents at large of that book to which they belong. They are, every one of them, taken either from the leading, (I should say the introductory,) passage of that particular book, or from that which makes the most conspicuous figure in it. Had I set off with a design to write upon a gridiron, and had I actually written near two hundred lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the Sofa, the Gridiron should have been my title. But the Sofa being, as I may say, the starting-post from which I addressed myself to the long race that I soon conceived a design to run, it acquired a just pre-eminence in my account, and was very worthily advanced to the titular honour

it enjoys, its right being at least so far a good one, that no word in the language could pretend a better.

The Time-piece appears to me, (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you,) to have a degree of propriety beyond the most of them. The book to which it belongs is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgement, and dealing pretty largely in the *signs* of the *times*, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the Paradise Lost, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it; but I am sure of the fact. I am mistaken, too, if Shakspeare's Cleopatra do not call the asp, by which she thought fit to destroy herself, by the same name. But not having read the play these five-and-twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are, however, without all doubt, convertible terms. A worm is a small serpent, and a serpent is a large worm. And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested, but the most formidable of all.

We do not often see, or rather feel, so severe a frost before Christmas. Unexpected, at least by me, it had like to have been too much for my greenhouse, my myrtles having found themselves yesterday morning in an atmosphere so cold that the mercury was fallen eight degrees below the freezing point.

We are truly sorry for Mrs. Newton's indisposition, and shall be glad to hear of her recovery. We are most liable to colds at this season, and at this season a cold is most difficult of cure.

Be pleased to remember us to the young ladies, and to all under your roof and elsewhere, who are mindful of us. And believe me,

Your affectionate,

WM. COWPER.

Your letters are gone to their address. The oysters were very good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 18, 1784.

I CONDOLE with you, that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you, that you escaped an ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail, with a philosopher or two on board, but at the same time should be very sorry to expose myself, for any length of time, to the rigour of the upper regions, at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind, which must needs accompany them in their flight; advantages, which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

The inscription of the poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have therefore an un-

doubted right to fashion it to your mind, nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared, however, that the Reviewers, or some of my very sagacious readers, not more merciful than they, might suspect that there was a secret design in the wind; and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might best introduce friend to public notice, as a clergyman every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a tutor for his children. I therefore added the words—"And of his two sons only"—by way of insinuating, that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more; thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction, which we are both of us incapable of deserving. But the same caution not having appeared to you to be necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not so.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons for the compliment I have paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place, then, I wished the world to know that I have no objection to a bishop, *quiâ* bishop. In the second place, the brothers were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon, which appeared to me,

when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense, and his unfeigned piety. For these causes me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man, who had been publicly traduced; and indeed the Reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion by the sermon preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of his lordship, who, whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance, at least, could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr. Newton, that did not please me, and returned an answer to it, that possibly may not have pleased him. His was fretful and peevish; and mine, if not chargeable with exactly the same qualities, was however dry and unsavoury enough. We shall come together again soon, I suppose, upon as amicable terms as usual: but at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased, had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

We wished to have thanked you sooner for three fine cod, with shrimps and oysters, all excellent in their way; but knew not where a letter might find you.

Yours, with our love to all,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Christmas eve, 1784.

I AM neither Mede nor Persian; neither am I the son of any such, but was born at Great Berkhampstead, in Hertfordshire, and yet I can neither find a new title for my book, nor please myself with any addition to the old one. I am, however, willing to hope that, when the volume shall cast itself at your feet, you will be in some measure reconciled to the name it bears, especially when you shall find it justified both by the exordium of the poem, and by the conclusion. But enough, as you say with great truth, of a subject very unworthy of so much consideration.

Had I heard any anecdotes of poor dying Daniel, that would have bid fair to deserve your attention, I should have sent them. The little that he is reported to have uttered of a spiritual import, was not very striking. That little, however, I can give you upon good authority. His brother asking him how he found himself; he replied, "I am very composed, and think that I may safely believe myself entitled to a portion." The world has had much to say in his praise, and both prose and verse have been employed to celebrate him

in the Northampton Mercury. But Christians, I suppose, have judged it best to be silent. If he ever drank at the fountain of life, he certainly drank also, and often too freely, of certain other streams, which are not to be bought without money and without price. He had virtues that dazzled the natural eye, and failings that shocked the spiritual one. But *iste dies indicabit.*

* * * * *

We are agreeably disappointed in Hannah: we feared that through a natural deficiency of understanding, we should always find her an encumbrance; but she has suddenly brightened up, and being put into such little offices as she is capable of, executes them with an expertness and alacrity at which we wonder. She has an exceeding good temper, and bids fair to discover more sense than we suspected would ever fall to her lot. Stephen Stow has behaved himself so well on board the ballast lighter, that he has been discharged before his time expired, and is now at Olney.

Mrs. Powley is less frequently visited with her fits, and they are less violent. She is still much comforted.

Mrs. Unwin intended you a present of a rope,—not of hemp, but of onions; but unfortunately forgot. Many thanks to Mrs. Newton for her care of the stockings. A little boy of Molly Thompson's, stepping over the threshold for a certain occasion, fell and broke his leg. Say not that I send you no news.

Yours, my dear friend, with our love to you all,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, Jan. 15. 1785.

YOUR letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a letter was the more easily written, because the writing of it had been long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as yours and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of information upon what terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month, I believe, has passed since I heard from him. But my *friseur* having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and having called at Hoxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not pleased that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect that he was even mortified at being informed, that a certain inscribed poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

I know not whether Mr. Smith has acted in consequence of your hint, or whether, not needing one, he

transmitted to us his bounty, before he had received it. He has, however, sent us a note for twenty pounds; with which we have performed wonders, in behalf of the ragged and the starved. He is a most extraordinary young man, and though I shall probably never see him, will always have a niche in the museum of my reverential remembrance.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the Muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH.

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred, may well make England proud;
Whose prose was Eloquence, by Wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought:
Whose verse may claim, grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song;
How many a noble gift from Heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies!

It is destined, I believe, to the Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which, when entrusted to a newspaper, can expect but the duration of a day. But Nichols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands, not yet printed,—(it is called the Poplar Field, and I suppose you have it,) I wait till his obstetrical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my epitaph upon Tiney: which, I likewise imagine, has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson. I am easy, however, upon that subject, being assured that so long as his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man, I presume, of great good sense and spirit, (his letters, at least, and his enterprising turn, bespeak him such,) a man qualified to shine not only among the stars, but in the more useful, though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon, ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason, why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when, for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 7, 1785.

We live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction that I have nothing to say. The event commonly justifies the presage. For when I

have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you, however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence to which you will not be altogether indifferent, that I have received, and revised, and returned to Johnson, the two first proof sheets of my new publication. The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning, however, I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplar Field appears. I have accordingly sent up two pieces more,—a Latin translation of it, which you have never seen, and another on a Rose-bud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which, whether you have seen or not, I know not. As fast as Nichols prints off the poems I send him, I send him new ones. My remittance usually consists of two; and he publishes one of them at a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without putting myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply was transmitted to him in August, and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following anecdote at your mother's instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk in oblivion. A certain lord Archibald Hamilton has hired the house of Mr. Small at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for a hunting seat. There he lives at present with his wife and daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respects, and I believe an amiable one in all. The Rev. Mr. Jones, the curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitation on a Sunday, recommended my volume to

their reading; and his lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed to the said Mr. Jones an ardent desire to be acquainted with the author, from motives which my great modesty will not suffer me to particularize. Mr. Jones, however, like a wise man, informed his lordship, that for certain special reasons and causes I had declined going into company for many years, and that therefore he must not hope for my acquaintance. His lordship most civilly subjoined that he was very sorry for it.

"And is that all?" say you. Now, were I to hear you say so, I should look foolish and say—"Yes." But having you at a distance, I snap my fingers at you, and say—"No, that is not all."—Mr. Teedon, who favours us now and then with his company in an evening, as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential interpositions that had taken place in his favour. "He had wished for many things (he said,) which, at the time when he formed those wishes, seemed distant and improbable, some of them indeed impossible. Among other wishes that he had indulged, one was, that he might be connected with men of genius and ability;—and in my connexion with this worthy gentleman, (said he, turning to me,) that wish, I am sure, is amply gratified." You may suppose that I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead, when I heard this speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken. So much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense.

Thus far I proceeded easily enough; and here I laid down my pen, and spent some minutes in recol-

lection, endeavouring to find some subject, with which I might fill the little blank that remains. But none presents itself. Farewell therefore, and remember those who are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fire-side, and believe me ever most affectionately yours,

W. C.

They that read Greek with the accents would pronounce the ε in φιλεω, as an η. But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it. I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Feb. 28, 1785.

PERMIT me to say that I think you dealt more generously with his Lordship[1] than wisely. Great men have great advantages, to which little ones have no need to make any voluntary addition; and it is perhaps one of the privileges to which their superiority is apt to think itself entitled, that they are in some sort emancipated from those obligations of civility and attention to small folks, by which the latter hold themselves bound in all their intercourse with *them*. It is possible, for instance, that his Lordship, without being at all offended by your application, may seem to take you at your word, and to avail himself of the leave you have given him to be silent, and in reality mean no

[1] Lord Petre.

such thing. He might, when he had just read your letter, even mean the contrary, and say to himself, I will send the poor devils something to keep them alive, by the first opportunity that I have of writing to Mr. Unwin; but other important matters intervening, his favourite mare having taken a nail in her foot, or his Lordship having occasion possibly to settle the structure and furniture of a new chariot, in that negligence of little men and little matters that belongs to nobility, he might overlook poor Butsbury and its benevolent advocate altogether. You in the mean time have precluded yourself from all future intercession in their behalf, because though his Lordship might not mean to put a silent negative upon your suit, you cannot be sure that he did not. I think therefore that you soared a little too high into the regions of civility upon this occasion; and if instead of telling him you should interpret his silence as an everlasting Nay, you had taken the liberty to insinuate the uneasiness of a state of suspense, and that being anxious both for the speedy relief of the people at Butsbury, and anxious likewise to know that you had not offended by addressing him in their behalf, you should therefore wait with some impatience for an answer,—you had done as well. But *serò sapere* belongs to man, and the pain that the acquisition of such wisdom costs us, amounts often to the full value of the purchase; and where feelings like yours are in question, perhaps to more.

I heartily wish you may be able to accommodate your difference about tithes without a lawsuit; both because the matter in dispute is small, and because you

are the last man living that should thrust yourself in among the nettles of litigation, if you can possibly avoid it; having so little flesh to feed that ravenous vexation of spirit to which you are liable. But if you must engage, and there be no remedy, in that case I recommend to you the celebrated Joseph Hill for an attorney, the Exchequer as well as the Chancery being his familiar province. He is an honest man, as a certain poet sings truly, and also of great ability—μικρον δεμας αλλα μαχητης. Barrister I know none, but he knows them all, and will recommend to you the fittest for the purpose.

Je suis mortifié that your cheese turns out no better: it came from a country most famous for that commodity, and was in my judgement the best of two which we were permitted to purchase as a favour:—*sed de caseis non est disputandum.*

The press proceeds like a broad-wheeled waggon, slow and sure. After the correction of the two first sheets, a complete month intervened before I received two more; and before I am favoured with another packet perhaps another month may be almost expended: So the wild goose in the meadow flaps her wings and flaps them, but yet she mounts not; she stands on tiptoe on the banks of Ouse, she meditates an ascent, she stretches her long neck, she flaps her wings again; the successful repetition of her efforts at last bears her above the ground; she mounts into the heavenly regions exulting, and who then shall describe her song?—to herself at least it makes ample recompense of her laborious exertions.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine, a poet appears

with my signature, of whom I know nothing, except that his verses did not please me. I mean therefore in future to insert an asterisk between my two initials by way of discrimination. I tell you this, that if at any time you should pick up the Magazine at a coffee-house, and cast your eye upon W. * C. you may know your friend when you see him.

We are as well as this terrible and unseasonable winter will permit. In the course of last week indeed I was very ill for a day or two, but James's powders has restored me.

Our best love attends you and all yours. My dear friend, I am very affectionately always at your service.

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, March 20, 1785.

I THANK you for your letter. It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained within the dimensions of a letter, for which I see cause to be more thankful. I was pleased too to see my opinion of his Lordship's *nonchalance* upon a subject that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing however that, were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner; so very different is the view that men in an elevated, and in an humble station, have of the same object. What appears great, sublime,

beautiful, and important, to you and to me, when submitted to the notice of my lord, or his grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or if seen, seems trivial, and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof sheets to the amount of ninety-six pages, and no more. In other words, I have received three packets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me however that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just insinuate to him, that, were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of the last. But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper however, and read it. There I found that the emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negotiations, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me. A great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities;—troops are in motion,—artillery is drawn together,—cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood and devastation,—thousands will perish, who are incapable of understanding the dispute; and thousands, who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel:—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then? You have composed

certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited;—be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects;—be concerned for the havoc of nations, and mourn over your retarded volume when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have asparagus, and plenty of cucumbers, and weather in which we may stroll to Weston; at least we may hope for it; therefore come in May; you will find us happy to receive you, and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We are very sorry for your Uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to be much in his favour, that season being of all remedies for the rheumatism I believe the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable;—but your own feelings on occasion of that article pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, "I know the Author." But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own.

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion. Adieu,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 22, 1785.

WHEN I received your account of the great celebrity of John Gilpin, I felt myself both flattered and grieved. Being man, and having in my composition all the ingredients of which other men are made, and vanity among the rest, it pleased me to reflect that I was on a sudden become so famous, and that all the world was busy enquiring after me: but the next moment, recollecting my former self, and that thirteen years ago, as harmless as John's history is, I should not then have written it, my spirits sank, and I was ashamed of my success. Your letter was followed the next post by one from Mr. Unwin. You tell me that I am rivalled by Mrs. Bellamy; and he, that I have a competitor for fame, not less formidable, in the Learned Pig. Alas! what is an author's popularity worth, in a world that can suffer a prostitute on one side, and a pig on the other, to eclipse his brightest glories? I am therefore sufficiently humbled by these considerations; and unless I should hereafter be ordained to engross the public attention by means more magnificent than a song, am persuaded that I shall suffer no real detriment by their applause. I have produced many things, under the influence of despair, which hope would not have permitted to spring. But if the soil of that melancholy, in which I have walked so long, has thrown up here and there an unprofitable fungus, it is well, at least, that it is not chargeable with having brought forth poison. Like you, I see, or think I can see, that Gil-

pin may have his use. Causes, in appearance trivial, produce often the most beneficial consequences; and perhaps my volumes may now travel to a distance, which, if they had not been ushered into the world by that notable horseman, they would never have reached.

I hope that neither the master of St. Paul's or any other school, who may have commenced my admirer on John's account, will write to me for such a reason; yet a little while, and if they have laughed with me, their note will be changed, and perhaps they will revile me. Tirocinium is no friend of theirs, on the contrary, if it have the effect I wish it to have, it will prove much their enemy; for it gives no quarter to modern pedagogues, but finding them all alike guilty of supineness and neglect in the affair of morals, condemns them, both schoolmasters and heads of colleges, without distinction. Our temper differs somewhat from that of the ancient Jews. They would neither dance nor weep. We indeed weep not, if a man mourn unto us; but I must needs say, that, if he pipe, we seem disposed to dance with the greatest alacrity. I ought to tell you that this remark has a reference to John Gilpin, otherwise having been jumbled a little out of its place you might be at a loss for the explication.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 30, 1785.

I RETURN you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also, from Mr. Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London, but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He tells me likewise, that the head master of St. Paul's school, (who he is I know not,) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me. Let us hope he will alter his mind; for should we even exchange civilities upon the occasion, Tirocinium will spoil all. The great estimation however in which this knight of the stone-bottles is held, may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume of which his history will make a part. Those events that prove the prelude to our greatest success, are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing. The disappointment that Horace mentions is reversed—We design a mug, and it proves a hogshead. It is a little hard, that I alone should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story. When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you. I thank you also for writing to Johnson. I likewise wrote to him myself. Your letter and mine together have operated to admiration. There needs

nothing more but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will soon be printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of the Task. The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses, that I have known. They would not budge till they were spurred, and when they were spurred, they would kick.—So did he; his temper was somewhat disconcerted: but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

I was very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last;—"I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication."—Now therefore we are friends again. Now he once more enquires after the work, which, till he had disburthened himself of this acknowledgement, neither he nor I, in any of our letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them, but both your mother and I have studiously deposited them with those who we thought were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only a hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such that they were sure to prevail.

You mention Bensley. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were schoolfellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again,

and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will, like Bensley, (who was but a boy when I left London,) boast of a connexion with me which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour; and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, I remember, in the life of one of our poets, (I believe of Savage,) says, that he retired from the world, flattering himself that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him. I think his observation upon it is, that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual is soon filled up; that a man may always be obscure, if he chooses to be so; and that he, who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected.

Your mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent bird. My nest is in a little nook. Here I brood and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectation.

Yours truly,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 4, 1785.

THANKS for the stockings, thanks for the mackerel. We were very sorry to learn from the bearer of the former that Mrs. Newton is still indisposed, and to such a degree that she could not spare Sally Johnson, whose intended journey, we are sure, would not have been postponed, had there not been too much cause for it. We heartily wish for a more favourable account of her.

Mr. Greatheed had your letter the day after we received it. He is a well-bred, agreeable young man, and one whose eyes have been opened, I doubt not, for the benefit of others, as well as for his own. He preached at Olney, a day or two ago, and I have reason to think with acceptance and success. One person, at least, who had been in prison some weeks, received his enlargement under him. I should have been glad to have been a hearer; but that privilege is not allowed me yet. Indeed, since I told you that I had hope, I have never ceased to despair; and have repented that I made my boast so soon, more than once. A king may forbid a man to appear before him, and it were strange if the King of kings might not do the same. I know it to be his will that I should not enter into his presence now; when the prohibition is taken off, I shall enter; but in the mean time I should neither please him, nor serve myself, by intruding.

We have lately been well taken in, to speak in the jockey phrase, or to speak more classically, duped and imposed upon. A certain short man with a rosy

round face, and a protuberant belly, calling himself Mr. Crawford, minister of a dissenting congregation in the Borough, attended us one day last week with a petition from his church for assistance towards payment of a debt incurred by rebuilding their meeting-house. Mrs. Unwin received him in the parlour. I was in the garden and was called in. Notwithstanding that physiognomy has, by the ingenious Mr. Lavater, been at length improved into a science, yet having never made it my particular study, I am with reason apt to distrust my own skill in the interpretation of features. On this occasion, however, a better opinion of my proficiency would have been advantageous to myself, and I should have done the object of it no wrong. The moment I saw him, something seemed to say to me, "that fellow is a rascal!" I rejected the information, to which had I given due credit, I should have saved five shillings. From this place he went to Towcester, gleaning however all that he could get at Wellingborough, and at other places by the way. At Towcester, a little on this side of the town he was seen by Mr. Shepherd, a dissenting minister of that place, leading a female companion into a wood at no great distance from the road, whom he saw him pick up as he went. Arriving not long after in the town of Towcester, he began immediately to exercise his petitioning talents, and calling in the first place upon Mr. Shepherd, was of course not a little surprised to find that he encountered, in that gentleman, an eye-witness of his shame. He denied the charge at first, but at length, being hard pushed, confessed it, and

had the impudence to plead the festivity of the season in his excuse, it being fair-time at Towcester, and the road consequently abounding with objects of temptation. He had drank, he said, a little too freely, and was therefore not sufficiently on his guard. Mr. Scott received this narrative from Mr. Shepherd, and I from Mr. Scott. The report of his offence flying before him, and meeting him in every place, his harvest in this part of the world at least was over. Accordingly he found it necessary to return. In his way to town, he passed again through Olney, not suspecting that his ill-savour had been wafted this way also. Mr. Wilson saw him, and as soon as he could followed him, overtook him upon the bridge, related to him what he had heard, and begged him, if he had the means of justification in his power, and valued either his own character, or the Gospel that he preached, (for he had preached at Olney,) to return and clear himself. He answered, that he valued his character highly, but that he had left some clean linen at Newport, and it was indispensably necessary that he should enquire after it. In vain Mr. Wilson assured him that a clear character was of more importance than a clean shirt; he persisted in his purpose, promising to return and to exculpate himself either in the evening or the next morning. But unhappily some other very important hinderance intervened, and he never came.—I have told you this long story, merely to guard you against such a vagrant should he come in your way, which I thought not impossible. It is true, however, (for enquiry has been made,) that he is a minister, that he

ministers in the Borough, and that his meeting-house has been rebuilt.

My book is at length printed, and I returned the last proof to Johnson on Tuesday. I have ordered a copy to Charles Square, and have directed Johnson to enclose one with it, addressed to John Bacon, Esq. I was obliged to give you this trouble, not being sure of the place of his abode. I have taken the liberty to mention him, as an artist, in terms that he well deserves. The passage was written soon after I received the engraving with which he favoured me, and while the impression that it made upon me was yet warm. He will, therefore, excuse the liberty that I have taken, and place it to the account of those feelings which he himself excited.

The walking season is returned. We visit the Wilderness daily. Mr. Throckmorton, last summer, presented me with a key of his garden. The family are all absent, except the priest and a servant or two; so that the honeysuckles, lilacs, and syringas, are all our own.

We are well. Mrs. Unwin subjoins her thanks to mine for the fish, and for the trouble that Mrs. Newton has taken with the stockings; and our united love attends yourselves and the young ladies.

Yours, my dear friend,
With much affection,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, June 12, 1785.

IT was at first your Mother's design to write, but learning from a second application to your letter that you would be far removed from Stock when hers should arrive there, she changed her purpose, and has entrusted the charge to me. My business therefore is to express the agreeable views we have of your expected visit here, and the sensations with which they are accompanied. Many words, I trust, will not be necessary to assure you that we enjoy the prospect which in your Mother's contemplation and mine appears to be all that we could wish, except that Mrs. Unwin's presence here makes not a part of it. If it were possible that she could waft herself to the door of the diligence, and by means of the diligence contrive to be set down at ours, we should allow the party to be complete. We could without difficulty make room for your other self, though under such a roof as ours it would puzzle him who packed up the Iliad in a nutshell to make room for more; else William, and Mary, and half a dozen others, if they were yours, would be most welcome. She begs, and so do I, that you would mention us not so much civilly as affectionately to Miss Unwin, and tell her that being no strangers to her character, but having learned it from the best authority, even your own, we sincerely rejoice that she is of the number. I indeed am under some little concern upon the occasion, having never known a writer in my life whose good fortune it had been in any degree to please his readers, that did not

disappoint in person the expectations he had raised by his book; insomuch that if I were asked which is the best part of a tolerable poet, I should answer, that which he has printed. But it will be well; my heart tells me that in all my intercourse with my friends I wish to shine in nothing but in esteeming and loving them as I ought,—a part, to which, however I may fail in others, I have the vanity to think myself not altogether unequal. Remember us also, with much affection, to Miss Shuttleworth, with whom being already acquainted, we are warranted by our experience to say that we shall be happy to see her. We are only sorry that we must lose you so soon; but of this, which is the only disagreeable part of the story, we will think as little as possible at present.

Under the languor and lassitude with which the heat of this day affects me, I am not able to send you a long letter. I am sitting in the summerhouse, (not the greenhouse,) the door, which is open, is toward the garden, and the window, which is open also, is toward a pleasant orchard, so that if it were possible to be cool, that happiness would be mine, but in such a day as this there is no room to hope for it. You have pleased me much by taking a book to Dewsbury. I wanted to send one, but knew of no conveyance. John Gilpin, whom you say you directed hither, has gallopped to some other place; at least he has not reached Olney.

Forget not to give our love to the Powleys. Your sister, we hope, will receive a benefit to her spirits from your visit, for which she will be long the better.

[illegible] as Solomon says, coming [illegible] the sight of friends [illegible] will [illegible].

[illegible] the [illegible], but now almost [illegible] to be altogether [illegible] yourself master of the Iliad and of the [illegible] and then you will be [illegible] of the [illegible] that ever were composed [illegible] in the [illegible] language [illegible]. All languages of which I know any [illegible] compared with Greek.

My dear William,

Ever yours,

W. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent turbot, and for a lobster equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June [illegible]

Your note written yesterday we receive this morning and are this moment going to breakfast. We are very sorry for the occasion of our disappointment.

Mrs. Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summerhouse not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly

If good news, as Solomon says, coming from a far country be pleasant, the sight of friends from a far country must be still more so.

John, once the Little, but now almost the Great, and promising to be altogether such in time, make yourself master of the Iliad and of the Odyssey as soon as you can, and then you will be master of two of the finest poems that ever were composed by man, and composed in the finest language that ever man uttered. All languages of which I know any thing are gibberish compared with Greek.

My dear William,

Ever yours,

WM. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent turbot, and for a lobster equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 13.

YOUR note written yesterday we receive this morning, and are this moment going to breakfast. We are truly sorry for the occasion of our disappointment.

Mrs. Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

June [illegible]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir* [illegible] a summerhouse not much bigger than a [illegible] the door of which opens into the [illegible] w crowded with pinks, roses, and [illegible] the window into my neighbour's [illegible] ly

If good news, as Solomon says, coming from a far country be pleasant, the sight of friends from a far country must be still more so.

John, once the Little, but now almost the Great, and promising to be altogether such in time, make yourself master of the Iliad and of the Odyssey as soon as you can, and then you will be master of two of the finest poems that ever were composed by man, and composed in the finest language that ever man uttered. All languages of which I know any thing are gibberish compared with Greek.

My dear William,

Ever yours,

WM. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent turbot, and for a lobster equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 13.

YOUR note written yesterday we receive this morning, and are this moment going to breakfast. We are truly sorry for the occasion of our disappointment.

Mrs. Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summerhouse not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly

If good news, as Solomon says, coming from a far country be pleasant, the sight of friends from a far country must be still more so.

John, once the Little, but now almost the Great, and promising to be altogether such in time, make yourself master of the Iliad and of the Odyssey as soon as you can, and then you will be master of two of the finest poems that ever were composed by man, and composed in the finest language that ever man uttered. All languages of which I know any thing are gibberish compared with Greek.

My dear William,

Ever yours,

WM. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent turbot, and for a lobster equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 13.

YOUR note written yesterday we receive this morning, and are this moment going to breakfast. We are truly sorry for the occasion of our disappointment.

Mrs. Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

If good news, as Solomon says, coming from a far country is pleasant, the sight of friends from a far country must be still more so.

[illegible] the Little, but now almost the Great [illegible] promising to be altogether such in time, make yourself master of the Iliad and of the Odyssey by [illegible] you will be master of two [illegible] that ever were composed by man, and [illegible] in the finest language that ever man [illegible] languages of which I know any thing are [illegible] and Greek.

My dear William,

Ever yours,

WM. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent sorbet, and for a [illegible] equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

June 13.

[illegible] written yesterday we receive this morning. [illegible] this moment going to breakfast. We are truly [illegible] for the occasion of our disappointment.

[illegible] Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summerhouse not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly

If good news, as Solomon says, coming from a far country be pleasant, the sight of friends from a far country must be still more so.

John, once the Little, but now almost the Great, and promising to be altogether such in time, make yourself master of the Iliad and of the Odyssey as soon as you can, and then you will be master of two of the finest poems that ever were composed by man, and composed in the finest language that ever man uttered. All languages of which I know any thing are gibberish compared with Greek.

My dear William,

Ever yours,

WM. C.

Many thanks for a most excellent turbot, and for a lobster equally good.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 13.

YOUR note written yesterday we receive this morning, and are this moment going to breakfast. We are truly sorry for the occasion of our disappointment.

Mrs. Unwin well knows the healer of all diseases, and will not fail to apply to him on your child's behalf.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, June 25, 1785.

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summerhouse not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly

served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But (thanks to my *Boudoir!*) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town was full;—and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience (you will perceive) is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, July 27, 1785.

You and your party left me in a frame of mind that indisposed me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations which, though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish. But that hope proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. Greatheed made his appearance at the greenhouse door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man; but with all his recommendations I felt that on that occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present whom we love a little. I have however made myself amends since, and nothing else having interfered, have sent many a thought after you.

You had been gone two days when a violent thunderstorm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was (I suppose) perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression that such an event never fails to affect me with;—the moment that he heard the thunder, (which was like the burst of a great gun,) with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked; but he barked exactly in concert with the

thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once; and so precisely in the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and to end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner, at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. A house at no great distance from ours was the mark to which the lightning was directed; it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk, and asleep upon his bed;—it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more; but I have seen a woeful end of many such conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney since I have known the place; and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. You have left behind you Thomson's Seasons, and a bottle of hartshorn. I will not promise that you shall ever see the latter again; having a sorethroat, I made free with part of it this morning, in the way of outward application, and we shall probably find a use for the remainder. The Seasons you shall have again.

I have received, since you went, two very flattering letters of thanks, one from Mr. Bacon, and one from Mr. Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump, and an humble poet proud. But being myself neither lean nor humble, I know of no other effect that they had, than that they pleased me; and I communicate the intelligence to you, not without an assured hope that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written before I have

received your letter. Friday.—I must now be as compact as possible. When I began, I designed four sides, but my packet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope, and shall send it by Sunday's post, indifferent whether Nichols detects me or not. I am proceeding in my translation—"*Velis et remis, omnibus nervis*" —as Hudibras has it; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next.

Your fish was good,—perfectly good, and we did not forget you in our cups. The money was found, and not a farthing had eloped. My hat is come, and we both admire it; but your mother's either was never sent, or sent the wrong way, for it has not reached us. Tell John that I love him with all my heart for doing so much credit to his tutor, and to my public recommendation of the very plan upon which he is educated.

Mr. Teedon has just left us. He has read my book, and, as if fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its beauties. I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion.

Be not sorry that your love of Christ was excited in you by a picture. Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought because a dog or a cat suggested it. The meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle. He that kneels before a picture of Christ, is an idolater: but he in whose

heart the sight of such a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian. Suppose that I dream as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy; Will a man tell me that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagination? I hold not with such divinity. To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may.

Adieu! May the blessing of God be upon you all! It is your mother's heart's wish and mine.

Yours ever,

W. C.

P. S. You had hardly reached Emberton when Mr. Teedon came to charge us with his thanks to Miss Unwin for her goodness to him; the poor man looked so humble and grateful, that I forgave him all his past intrusions. I beseech you, therefore, that you transmit his acknowledgments to his kind benefactress.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 6, 1785.

I FOUND your account of what you experienced in your state of maiden authorship very entertaining, because very natural. I suppose that no man ever made his first sally from the press without a conviction that all eyes and ears would be engaged to attend

him; at least, without a thousand anxieties lest they should not. But, however arduous and interesting such an enterprise may be in the first instance, it seems to me that our feelings on the occasion soon become obtuse. I can answer, at least, for one. Mine are by no means what they were when I published my first volume. I am even so indifferent to the matter, that I can truly assert myself guiltless of the very idea of my book sometimes whole days together. God knows that my mind having been occupied more than twelve years in the contemplation of the most tremendous subjects, the world and its opinion of what I write, is become as unimportant to me as the whistling of a bird in a bush. Despair made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement. Had I not endeavoured to perform my best, it would not have amused me at all. The mere blotting of so much paper would have been but indifferent sport. God gave me grace also to wish that I might not write in vain. Accordingly, I have mingled much truth with much trifle; and such truths as deserved, at least, to be clad as well and as handsomely as I could clothe them. If the world approve me not, so much the worse for them, but not for me. I have only endeavoured to serve them, and the loss will be their own. And as to their commendations, if I should chance to win them, I feel myself equally invulnerable there. The view that I have had of myself, for many years, has been so truly humiliating, that I think the praises of all mankind could not hurt me. God knows that I speak my present sense of the matter at least most truly, when I say, that the admi-

ration of creatures like myself seems to me a weapon the least dangerous that my worst enemy could employ against me. I am fortified against it by such solidity of real self-abasement, that I deceive myself most egregiously if I do not heartily despise it. Praise belongeth to God; and I seem to myself to covet it no more than I covet divine honours. Could I assuredly hope that God would at last deliver me, I should have reason to thank him for all that I have suffered, were it only for the sake of this single fruit of my affliction,—that it has taught me how much more contemptible I am in myself than I ever before suspected, and has reduced my former share of self-knowledge, (of which at that time I had a tolerable good opinion,) to a mere nullity, in comparison with what I have acquired since. Self is a subject of inscrutable misery and mischief, and can never be studied to so much advantage as in the dark; for as the bright beams of the sun seem to impart a beauty to the foulest objects, and can make even a dunghill smile, so the light of God's countenance, vouchsafed to a fallen creature, so sweetens him and softens him for the time, that he seems, both to others and to himself, to have nothing savage or sordid about him. But the heart is a nest of serpents, and will be such while it continues to beat. If God cover the mouth of that nest with his hand, they are hush and snug; but if he withdraw his hand, the whole family lift up their heads and hiss, and are as active and venomous as ever. This I always professed to believe from the time that I had embraced the truth, but never knew it as I know it now. To what end I have been made

to know it as I do, whether for the benefit of others or for my own, or for both, or for neither, will appear hereafter.

What I have written leads me naturally to the mention of a matter that I had forgot. I should blame nobody, not even my intimate friends, and those who have the most favourable opinion of me, were they to charge the publication of John Gilpin, at the end of so much solemn and serious truth, to the score of the author's vanity; and to suspect that, however sober I may be upon proper occasions, I have yet that itch for popularity that would not suffer me to sink my title to a jest that had been so successful. But the case is not such. When I sent the copy of *The Task* to Johnson, I desired, indeed, Mr. Unwin to ask him the question, whether or not he would choose to make it a part of the volume? This I did merely with a view to promote the sale of it. Johnson answered, "By all means." Some months afterward, he enclosed a note to me in one of my packets, in which he expressed a change of mind, alleging, that to print John Gilpin would only be to print what had been hackneyed in every magazine, in every shop, and at the corner of every street. I answered, that I desired to be entirely governed by his opinion; and that if he chose to waive it, I should be better pleased with the omission. Nothing more passed between us upon the subject, and I concluded that I should never have the immortal honour of being generally known as the author of John Gilpin. In the last packet, however, down came John, very fairly printed, and equipped

for public appearance. The business having taken this turn, I concluded that Johnson had adopted my original thought, that it might prove advantageous to the sale; and as he had had the trouble and expense of printing it, I corrected the copy, and let it pass. Perhaps, however, neither the book nor the writer may be made much more famous by John's good company, than they would have been without it; for the volume has never yet been advertised, nor can I learn that Johnson intends it. He fears the expense, and the consequence must be prejudicial. Many who would purchase will remain uninformed: but I am perfectly content.

My compliment to Mr. Throckmorton was printed before he had cut down the Spinney. He indeed has not cut it down, but Mr. Morley, the tenant,—with the owner's consent, however, no doubt. My poetical civilities, however, were due to that gentleman, for more solid advantages conferred upon me in prose; without any solicitation on our part, or even a hint that we wished it, (it was indeed a favour that we could not have aspired to,) he made us a present of a key of his kitchen garden, and of the fruit of it whenever we pleased. That key, I believe, was never given to any other person; nor is it likely that they should give it to many, for it is their favourite walk, and was the only one in which they could be secure from all interruption. They seem, however, to have left the country, and it is possible that he may never know that my Muse has noticed him.

I have considered your motto, and like the purport

of it: but the best, because the most laconic manner of it, seems to be this—

Cum talis sis, sis noster;

utinam being, in my account of it, unnecessary.

Mrs. Newton has our hearty thanks for the turbot and lobster, which were excellent. To her and to the young ladies we beg to be affectionately remembered.

Three weeks since, Mr. Unwin and his late ward, Miss Shuttleworth, and John, called on us in their way from the north, having made an excursion so far as to Dumfries. Mr. Unwin desired me to say, that though he had been often in town since he had the pleasure of seeing you last, he had always gone thither on business, and making a short stay, had not been able to find an opportunity to pay his respects to you again.

Yours, my dear friend, most truly,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 27, 1785.

I DID very warmly and very sincerely thank Mr. Bacon for his most friendly and obliging letter; but having written my acknowledgments in the cover, I suppose that they escaped your notice. I should not have contented myself with transmitting them through your hands, but should have addressed them immediately to himself, but that I foresaw plainly this inconvenience: that, in writing to him on such an occasion,

I must almost unavoidably make self and self's book the subject. Therefore it was, as Mrs. Unwin can vouch for me, that I denied myself that pleasure. I place this matter now in the van of all that I have to say: first, that you may not overlook it; secondly, because it is uppermost in my consideration; and thirdly, because I am impatient to be exculpated from the seeming omission.

You told me, I think, that you seldom read the papers. In our last we had an extract from Johnson's Diary, or whatever else he called it. It is certain that the publisher of it is neither much a friend to the cause of religion nor to the author's memory; for, by the specimen of it that has reached us, it seems to contain only such stuff as has a direct tendency to expose both to ridicule. His prayers for the dead, and his minute account of the rigour with which he observed church fasts, whether he drank tea or coffee, whether with sugar or without, and whether one or two dishes of either, are the most important items to be found in this childish register of the great Johnson, supreme dictator in the chair of literature, and almost a driveller in his closet: a melancholy witness to testify how much of the wisdom of this world may consist with almost infantine ignorance of the affairs of a better. I remember a good man at Huntingdon, who, I doubt not, is now with God, and he also kept a Diary. After his death, through the neglect or foolish wantonness of his executors, it came abroad for the amusement of his neighbours. All the town saw it, and all the town found it highly diverting. It contained much more valuable matter than the poor

Doctor's Journal seems to do; but it contained also a faithful record of all his deliverances from wind (for he was much troubled with flatulence), by whatever vent it escaped him; together with pious acknowledgments of the mercy. There is certainly a call for gratitude, whatsoever benefit we receive; and it is equally certain, that we ought to be humbled under the recollection of our least offences: but it would have been as well if neither my old friend had recorded his eructations, nor the Doctor his dishes of sugarless tea, or the dinners at which he ate too much. I wonder, indeed, that any man of such learned eminence as Johnson, who knew that every word he uttered was deemed oracular, and that every scratch of his pen was accounted a treasure, should leave behind him what he would have blushed to exhibit while he lived. If Virgil would have burnt his Æneid, how much more reason had these good men to have burnt their Journals.

Mr. Perry will leave none such behind him. He is dying, as I suppose you have heard. Dr. Kerr, who, I think, has visited him twice or thrice, desired at his last visit to be no more sent for. He pronounced his case hopeless; for that his thigh and leg must mortify. He is, however, in a most comfortable frame of mind. So long as he thought it possible that he might recover, he was much occupied with a review of his ministry; and under a deep impression of his deficiencies in that function, assured Mr. Raban that he intended, when he should enter upon it again, to be much more diligent than he had been. He was conscious, he said, that many fine things had been said of him; but

that, though he trusted he had found grace so to walk as not to dishonour his office, he was conscious, at the same time, how little he deserved them. This, with much more to the same purport, passed on Sunday last. On Thursday, Mr. Raban was with him again; and at that time Mr. Perry knew that he must die. The rules and cautions that he had before prescribed to himself, he then addressed directly to his visitor. He exhorted him, by all means, to be earnest and affectionate in his applications to the unconverted, and not less solicitous to admonish the careless, with a head full of light, and a heart alienated from the ways of God; and those, no less, who being wise in their own conceit, were much occupied in matters above their reach, and very little with subjects of immediate and necessary concern. He added, that he had received from God, during his illness, other views of sin than he had ever been favoured with before; and exhorted him by all means to be watchful. Mr. Raban being himself the reporter of these conversations, it is to be supposed that they impressed him. Admonitions from such lips, and in a dying time too, must have their weight; and it is well with the hearer, when the instruction abides with him. But our own view of these matters is, I believe, that alone which can effectually serve us. The representations of a dying man may strike us at the time; and, if they stir up in us a spirit of self-examination and inquiry, so that we rest not till we have made his views and experience our own, it is well; otherwise, the wind that passes us is hardly sooner gone, than the effect of the most serious exhortations.

We have new neighbours; with whom, however, we should be very sorry to live as such; but there is no danger. Lord Peterborough and *his* Lady Anne Foley have hired a house at Weston, and a young man of the name of Smith, who they say finds it convenient to be at a distance from his creditors, is of the party. Mr. Jones, whom we saw lately, but whom we do not see once in three months, begins to be weary of his master. His connexion with him indeed exposes him, at present, to almost inevitable danger of giving offence both to those that are within and to those that are without. It is hardly possible for a minister of the gospel to be more unsuitably associated. I take it for granted that he will have to do with them as little as possible.

We heartily wish that Mrs. Newton's excursion to the salt water may prove beneficial both to herself and to Miss Cunningham. I need not say, give our love to them, for you will send my letter. The coldness of this August is without precedent in my remembrance, but I have heard that bathing is most salutary in such a season. We beg to be remembered affectionately to Miss Catlett, and to all who ever think of us, and who are in the number of your connexions.

Farewell, my friend. My views of my spiritual state are, as you say, altered; but they are yet far from being such as they must be, before I can be enduringly comforted.

Yours, unfeignedly,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 27, 1785.

I WAS low in spirits yesterday, when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar bottle is welcome from his friends on the outside of it; accordingly your books were welcome, (you must not forget by the way that I want the original, of which you have sent me the translation only,) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum.—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms.

You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem is like a swan, it flies heavily, and never far; but a jest has the wings of a swallow, that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception that my volume meets with, and I believe in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an example, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless, that although the laurels that I gain at Olney will never minister much to my pride, I have *acquired* some. The Rev. Mr. Scott is my admirer,

and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us; and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was, that he was the greatest elephant in the world, himself excepted. This moment it occurs to me, that we have received from you a basket of very fine fish, unacknowledged hitherto, the receipt of which I hereby then thankfully acknowledge.

If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor ——'s of flatulent memory. The portion of it given to us in this day's paper contains not one sentiment worth one farthing; except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think, that to pray for his dead wife, and to pinch himself with church fasts, had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry that he, who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue in all other places, was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort have rather the appearance of religious dotage, than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised,

to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules, for the conduct of life, which, though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner with the above-mentioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough: for the sake of one, however, I forgive him the rest; he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace by disappointment I would wish to cherish upon every subject, in which I am interested. But there lies the difficulty,—mine at least; whose sanguine temper does not incline me to, nor even permit me, moderation in any thing. A cure, however, and the only one, for all the irregularities both of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in a former letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective claims of *who* and *that*. I do not rashly differ from so great a grammarian, nor do I at any rate differ from him altogether;—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones;—for instance were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector *who* saw Patroclus, is right. And the man *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also;—

because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression, that in respect of the matter of it cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfast-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Sept. 24, 1785.

I AM sorry that an excursion, which you would otherwise have found so agreeable, was attended with so great a drawback upon its pleasures as Miss Cunningham's illness must needs have been. Had she been able to bathe in the sea, it might have been of service to her; but I knew her weakness and delicacy of habit to be such as did not encourage any very sanguine hopes that the regimen would suit her. I remember Southampton well, having spent much time there; but though I was young, and had no objections on the score of conscience either to dancing or cards, I never was in the assembly-room in my life. I never was fond of company, and especially disliked it in the country. A walk to Netley Abbey, or to Freemantle, or to Redbridge, or a book by the fire-side, had always more charms for me than any other amusement that the place afforded. I was also a sailor, and being of Sir Thomas Hesketh's party, who was himself born one, was often pressed into the service. But though

I gave myself an air, and wore trowsers, I had no genuine right to that honour, disliking much to be occupied in great waters, unless in the finest weather. How they contrive to elude the wearisomeness that attends a sea life, who take long voyages, you know better than I; but for my own part, I seldom have sailed so far as from Hampton river to Portsmouth, without feeling the confinement irksome, and sometimes to a degree that was almost insupportable. There is a certain perverseness, of which I believe all men have a share, but of which no man has a larger share than I;—I mean that temper, or humour, or whatever it is to be called, that indisposes us to a situation, though not unpleasant in itself, merely because we cannot get out of it. I could not endure the room in which I now write, were I conscious that the door were locked. In less than five minutes I should feel myself a prisoner, though I can spend hours in it, under an assurance that I may leave it when I please, without experiencing any tedium at all. It was for this reason, I suppose, that the yacht was always disagreeable to me. Could I have stepped out of it into a corn-field or a garden, I should have liked it well enough; but being surrounded with water, I was as much confined in it as if I had been surrounded by fire, and did not find that it made me any adequate compensation for such an abridgement of my liberty. I make little doubt but Noah was glad when he was enlarged from the ark; and we are sure that Jonah was, when he came out of the fish; and so was I to escape from the good sloop the Harriet.

In my last, I wrote you word that Mr. Perry was

given over by his friends, and pronounced a dead man by his physician. Just when I had reached the end of the foregoing paragraph, he came in. His errand hither was to bring two letters, which I enclose; one is to yourself, in which he will give you, I doubt not, such an account both of his body and mind, as will make all that I might say upon those subjects superfluous. The only consequences of his illness seem to be, that he looks a little pale, and that though always a most excellent man, he is still more angelic than he was. Illness sanctified is better than health. But I know a man who has been a sufferer by a worse illness than his, almost these fourteen years, and who at present is only the worse for it.

Mr. Scott called upon us yesterday: he is much inclined to set up a Sunday school, if he can raise a fund for the purpose. Mr. Jones has had one some time at Clifton; and Mr. Unwin writes me word that he has been thinking of nothing else day and night, for a fortnight. It is a wholesome measure, that seems to bid fair to be pretty generally adopted, and for the good effects that it promises, deserves well to be so. I know not, indeed, while the spread of the gospel continues so limited as it is, how a reformation of manners, in the lower class of mankind, can be brought to pass; or by what other means the utter abolition of all principle among them, moral as well as religious, can possibly be prevented. Heathenish parents can only bring up heathenish children; an assertion no where oftener or more clearly illustrated than at Olney; where children, seven years of age, infest the streets every evening with curses and with songs, t

which it would be unseemly to give their proper epithet. Such urchins as these could not be so diabolically accomplished, unless by the connivance of their parents. It is well, indeed, if in some instances their parents be not themselves their instructors. Judging by their proficiency, one can hardly suppose any other. It is, therefore, doubtless an act of the greatest charity to snatch them out of such hands, before the inveteracy of the evil shall have made it desperate. Mr. Teedon, I should imagine, will be employed as a teacher, should this expedient be carried into effect. I know not, at least, that we have any other person among us so well qualified for the service. He is indisputably a Christian man, and miserably poor, whose revenues need improvement, as much as any children in the world can possibly need instruction.

I understand that Mr. Jones is in London; it is possible that you may have seen him, and if you have, are better acquainted with his present intentions respecting Lord Peterborough than myself. We saw him, not long since, when he talked of resigning his office immediately; but I hear that he was afterwards otherwise advised, and repented of his purpose. I think it great pity that he did. A thing that a man had better never have touched cannot too soon be relinquished. While his principal kept himself at a distance, his connexion with him was less offensive; but now to all who interest themselves in his conduct as a minister of the gospel, it is an offence indeed. He seems aware of it, and we hope, therefore, will soon abandon it.

Mrs. Unwin hopes that a hare, which she sent

before Mrs. Newton went her journey, arrived safe By this week's coach she also sent three fowls and a ham, with cabbages, of whose safe arrival she will likewise be glad to hear. She has long been troubled with a pain in her side, which we take to be of the spasmodic kind, but is otherwise well. She joins with me in love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, and to the young ladies; neither do we forget Sally Johnson.

Believe me, my dear friend,
With true affection, yours,
W. C.

Hannah desires me to give her duty to Miss Cunningham and to Miss Catlett.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Oct. 16, 1785.

To have sent a child to heaven is a great honour and a great blessing, and your feelings on such an occasion may well be such as render you rather an object of congratulation than of condolence. And were it otherwise, yet, having yourself free access to all the sources of genuine consolation, I feel that it would be little better than impertinence in me to suggest any. An escape from a life of suffering to a life of happiness and glory, is such a deliverance as leaves no room for the sorrow of survivors, unless they sorrow for themselves. We cannot, indeed, lose what we love without regretting it; but a Christian is in possession of such alleviations of that regret, as the world knows not

of. Their beloveds, when they die, go they know not whither; and if they suppose them, as they generally do, in a state of happiness, they have yet but an indifferent prospect of joining them in that state hereafter. But it is not so with you. You both know whither your beloved is gone, and you know that you shall follow her; and you know also that in the mean time she is incomparably happier than yourself. So far, therefore, as she is concerned, nothing has come to pass but what was most fervently to be wished. I do not know that I am singularly selfish; but one of the first thoughts that your account of Miss Cunningham's dying moments and departure suggested to me, had self for its object. It struck me that she was not born when I sank into darkness, and that she is gone to heaven before I have emerged again. What a lot, said I to myself, is mine! whose helmet is fallen from my head, and whose sword from my hand, in the midst of the battle; who was stricken down to the earth when I least expected it; who had just begun to cry victory! when I was defeated myself; and who have been trampled upon so long, that others have had time to conquer and to receive their crown, before I have been able to make one successful effort to escape from under the feet of my enemies. It seemed to me, therefore, that if you mourned for Miss Cunningham, you gave those tears to her to which I only had a right, and I was almost ready to exclaim, "I am the dead, and not she; you misplace your sorrows." I have sent you the history of my mind on this subject without any disguise; if it does not please you, pardon it at least, for it is the truth. The unhappy, I believe,

are always selfish. I have, I confess, my comfortable moments; but they are like the morning dew, so suddenly do they pass away and are gone. I had a dream twelve years ago, before the recollection of which all consolation vanishes, and as it seems to me, must always vanish. But I will neither trouble you with my dream nor with any comments upon it; for, if it were possible, I should do well to forget that, the remembrance of which is incompatible with my comfort.

It should seem a matter of small moment to me, who never hear him, whether Mr. Scott shall be removed from Olney to the Lock, or no; yet, in fact, I believe that few interest themselves more in that event than I. He knows my manner of life, and has ceased long since to wonder at it. A new minister would need information, and I am not ambitious of having my tale told to a stranger. He would also, perhaps, think it necessary to assail me with arguments, which would be more profitably disposed of if he should discharge them against the walls of a tower. I wish, therefore, for the continuance of Mr. Scott. He honoured me so far as to consult me twice upon the subject. At our first interview, he seemed to discern but little in the proposal that entitled it to his approbation. But when he came the second time, we observed that his views of it were considerably altered. He was warm,—he was animated; difficulties had disappeared, and allurements had started up in their place. I could not say to him, Sir, you are naturally of a sanguine temper; and he that is so, cannot too much distrust his own judgement;—but I am glad that he will have the benefit of yours. It seems to me, how

ever, that the minister who shall re-illume the faded glories of the Lock, must not only practise great fidelity in his preaching, to which task Mr. Scott is perfectly equal, but must do it with much address; and it is hardly worth while to observe, that his excellence does not lie that way, because he is ever ready to acknowledge it himself. But I have nothing to suggest upon this subject that will be new to you, and therefore drop it; the rather, indeed, because I may reasonably suppose that by this time the point is decided.

I have reached that part of my paper which I generally fill with intelligence, if I can find any: but there is a great dearth of it at present; and Mr. Scott has probably anticipated me in all the little that there is. Lord Peterborough having dismissed Mr. Jones from his service, the people of Turvey have burnt him [Mr. Jones] in effigy, with a bundle of quick-thorn under his arm. What consequences are to follow his dismission, is uncertain. His lordship threatens him with a lawsuit; and unless their disputes can be settled by arbitration, it is not unlikely that the profits of poor Jones's stewardship will be melted down at Westminster. He has laboured hard, and no doubt with great integrity, and has been rewarded with hard words and scandalous treatment.

Mr. Scott (which perhaps he may not have told you, for he did not mention it here) has met with similar treatment at a place in this country called Hinksey[1], or by some such name. But he suffered in effigy for the Gospel's sake;—a cause in which I

[1] Tingewick, near Buckingham, was the place where this insult was offered to Mr. Scott.

presume he would not be unwilling, if need were, to be burnt *in propriâ personâ*.

I have nothing to add, but that we are well, and remember you with much affection; and that I am, my dear friend,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Oct. 22, 1785.

You might well suppose that your letter had miscarried, though in fact it was duly received. I am not often so long in arrear, and you may assure yourself that when at any time it happens that I am so, neither neglect nor idleness is the cause. I have, as you well know, a daily occupation,—forty lines to translate, a task which I never excuse myself when it is possible to perform it. Equally sedulous I am in the matter of transcribing, so that between both, my morning and evening are for the most part completely engaged. Add to this, that though my spirits are seldom so bad but that I can write verse, they are often at so low an ebb as to make the production of a letter impossible. So much for a trespass which called for some apology, but for which to apologise further, would be to commit a greater trespass still.

I know not whether you saw my letter to Mr. Urban. It was printed in the Magazine for August, and produced in that for September a citation from Say's Essays, made by Mr. Nichols himself, of which Homer's celebrated moonlight night is the subject. Say's

opinion of Pope's translation of that passage, confirms what I have said of it in my epistle. I may therefore reasonably conclude, that Nichols, who makes the quotation, is on my side also. I do not know that Pope's work was ever more roughly handled than by myself upon this occasion; yet although the Magazine be a field in which disputants upon all questions contend, no one has hitherto enlisted himself on Pope's behalf against me. The truth is, that on those points where I touched him, he is indefensible. Readers of the original know it; and all others must be conscious, that whether he deserves my censure, or deserves it not, the matter is not for them to meddle with. I am now in the twentieth book of Homer, and shall assuredly proceed, because the farther I go the more I find myself justified in the undertaking: and in due time, if I live, shall assuredly publish. In the whole I shall have composed about forty thousand verses, about which forty thousand verses I shall have taken great pains, on no occasion suffering a slovenly line to escape me. I leave you to guess therefore whether, such a labour once achieved, I shall not determine to turn it to some account, and to gain myself profit if I can,—if not, at least some credit, for my reward.

I perfectly approve of your course with John. The most entertaining books are the best to begin with, and none in the world, so far as entertainment is concerned, deserves the preference to Homer. Neither do I know that there is any where to be found Greek of easier construction,—poetical Greek I mean; and as for prose, I should recommend Xenophon's Cyropædia. That also is a most amusing narrative, and

ten times easier to understand than the crabbed epigrams and scribblements of the minor poets, that are generally put into the hands of boys. I took particular notice of the neatness of John's Greek character, which (let me tell you) deserves its share of commendation; for to write the language legibly is not the lot of every man who can read it. Witness myself for one.

I like the little ode of Huntingford's that you sent me. In such matters we do not expect much novelty, or much depth of thought. The expression is all in all, which to me at least appears to be faultless. Yet Huntingford's Monostrophics have been my ratsbane for these six months past. Not a Review has been published, I think, (a Monthly one at least,) of which they have not occupied a third part. The learned Poet, it seems, had the misfortune to meet with a more learned Critic. The Critic found many faults in his Greek. The Poet justified. The Critic replied; and though this controversy was conducted on the part of both with the utmost good temper, mine, I must confess, has been sometimes a little ruffled by the length of it. I wish, said I to myself, that if men must needs write odes, they would write them in a language of which they are sure they are masters.

But oh! what is Huntingford to Robert Heron, Esq.? Have you seen that man's Letters of Literature? If you have, then say with me, I beseech you, that you have seen the vainest, the cruellest, the most unjustifiable attack upon the most eminent writers that was ever made. I should long to see him well and handsomely chastised, if I did not account him beneath

the notice of any man equal to the task. But he that can find no beauties in Virgil, and, which is worse, not a single instance of the sublime in Scripture, must either belie himself, or be of all creatures that live, the most destitute of taste and sensibility.

Adieu, my dear William! We are well, and you and yours are ever the objects of our affection.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I AM glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations. No, I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even while I was under the influence of a persuasion that I should never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the traveller, described in Pope's Messiah, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how I ought to behave. At the same time that I would not grieve you, by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as

careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money, but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point, since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction, to that effect, under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end, nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say I am so occupied, you have my poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read, and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 5, 1785.

WERE it with me as in days past, you should have no cause to complain of my tardiness in writing. You supposed that I would have accepted your packet as an answer to my last; and so indeed I did and felt myself overpaid,—but though a debtor, and deeply indebted too, had not wherewithal to discharge the arrear. You do not know nor suspect what a conquest I sometimes gain, when I only take up the pen with a design to write. Many a time have I resolved to say to all my few correspondents,—"I take my leave of you for the present; if I live to see h shall hear from me again." I have be very verge of this measure; and

sion, was upon the point of desiring Mrs. Unwin to become my substitute. She, indeed, offered to write in my stead; but fearing that you would understand me to be even worse than I am, I rather chose to answer for myself. So much for a subject with which I could easily fill the sheet, but with which I have occupied too great a part of it already. It is time that I should thank you, and return you Mrs. Unwin's thanks for your Narrative. I told you, in my last, in what manner I felt myself affected by the abridgement of it contained in your letter; and have therefore only to add, upon that point, that the impression made upon me by the relation at large was of a like kind. I envy all that live in the enjoyment of a good hope, and much more all who die to enjoy the fruit of it: but I recollect myself in time; I resolved not to touch that chord again, and yet was just going to trespass upon my resolution. As to the rest, your history of your happy niece is just what it should be,—clear, affectionate, and plain; worthy of her, and worthy of yourself. How much more beneficial to the world might such a memorial of an unknown, but pious and believing child, eventually prove, would the supercilious learned condescend to read it, than the history of all the kings and heroes that ever lived! But the world has its objects of admiration, and God has objects of his love. Those make a noise and perish; and these weep silently for a short season, and live for ever. I had rather have been your niece, or the writer of her story, than any Cæsar that ever thundered.

The vanity of human attainments was never so conspicuously exemplified as in the present day. The

sagacious moderns make discoveries, which, how useful they may prove to themselves I know not; certainly they do no honour to the ancients. Homer and Virgil have enjoyed, (if the dead have any such enjoyments,) an unrivalled reputation as poets through a long succession of ages: but it is now shrewdly suspected that Homer did not compose the poems for which he has been so long applauded; and it is even asserted by a certain Robert Heron, Esq. that Virgil never wrote a line worth reading. He is a pitiful plagiary; he is a servile imitator, a bungler in his plan, and has not a thought in his whole work that will bear examination. In short, he is any thing but what the literati for two thousand years have taken him to be—a man of genius, and a fine writer. I fear that Homer's case is desperate. After the lapse of so many generations, it would be a diffiult matter to elucidate a question which time and modern ingenuity together combine to puzzle. And I suppose that it were in vain for an honest plain man to enquire, "If Homer did not write the Iliad and the Odyssey, who did?" The answer would undoubtedly be—"It is no matter; he did not: which is all that I undertook to prove." For Virgil, however, there still remains some consolation. The very same Mr. Heron, who finds no beauties in the Æneid, discovers not a single instance of the sublime in Scripture. Particularly, he says, speaking of the prophets, that Ezekiel, although the filthiest of all writers, is the best of them. He, therefore, being the first of the learned who has reprobated even the style of the Scriptures, may possibly make the fewer proselytes to his judgement of a heathen writer. For my

own part, at least, had I been accustomed to doubt whether the Æneid were a noble composition or not, this gentleman would at once have decided the question for me; and I should have been immediately assured, that a work must necessarily abound in beauties that had the happiness to displease a censurer of the Word of God. What enterprises will not an inordinate passion for fame suggest? It prompted one man to fire the Temple of Ephesus; another, to fling himself into a volcano; and now has induced this wicked and unfortunate squire either to deny his own feelings, or to publish to all the world that he has no feelings at all.

This being the fifth of November, is the worst of all days in the year for letter-writing. Continually called upon to remember the bonfire, one is apt to forget every thing else. The boys at Olney have likewise a very entertaining sport, which commences annually upon this day: they call it Hockey; and it consists in dashing each other with mud, and the windows also, so that I am forced to rise now and then, and to threaten them with a horsewhip, to preserve our own. We know that the Roman boys whipped tops, trundled the hoop, and played at tennis; but I believe we nowhere read that they delighted in these filthy aspersions: I am inclined, therefore, to give to the slovenly but ingenious youths of Olney full credit for the invention. It will be well if the Sunday school may civilize them to a taste for more refined amusements. That measure is so far in forwardness that a subscription is made: but it amounts, I am told, to no more than nineteen pounds; a feeble beginning, which,

as taxes are continually growing, promises no long duration.

We have lost our noble neighbours: Lord Peterborough and his lady are gone; and gone to return no more. Mr. Throckmorton was so much displeased with his steward, Mr. Morley, for letting them his house, that he had almost dismissed him from his service. He is not likely, indeed, to keep it long: having made too free with spirituous liquors, his legs begin to swell, and he is going fast into a dropsy.

Mr. Jones and Lord Peterborough have parted at last; and, after many bickerings, have parted upon amicable terms. Jones having delivered in an honest account refused to falsify it to the prejudice of his own reputation, and his master threatened him with a lawsuit. But finding him inflexible, and not to be intimidated, he gave him his hand, treated him as a friend, and admitted him into his confidence. It is well for little folks that great folks are apt to be somewhat capricious; they would otherwise, perhaps, be at all times insolent and oppressive alike.

Mr. Scott is pestered with anonymous letters, but he conducts himself wisely; and the question whether he shall go to the Lock or not, seems hasting to a decision in the affirmative.

We are tolerably well: and Mrs. Unwin adds to mine her affectionate remembrances of yourself and Mrs. Newton.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 9, 1785.

You desired me to return your good brother the bishop's charge as soon as I conveniently could, and the weather having forbidden us to hope for the pleasure of seeing you, and Mrs. Bagot with you, this morning, I return it now, lest, as you told me that your stay in this country would be short, you should be gone before it could reach you.

I wish, as you do, that the charge in question could find its way into all the parsonages in the nation. It is so generally applicable, and yet so pointedly enforced, that it deserves the most extensive spread. I find in it the happiest mixture of spiritual authority, the meekness of a Christian, and the good manners of a gentleman. It has convinced me, that the poet, who, like myself, shall take the liberty to pay the author of such valuable admonition a compliment, shall do at least as much honour to himself as to his subject.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Olney, Nov. 23, 1785.

I am obliged to you for having allotted your morning to me, and not less obliged to you for writing, when the opportunity you had set apart for that purpose had been almost entirely consumed by others. It cost me some little deliberation to decide whether I should answer by this night's post, or whether I should wait

till I could tell you that the wine is arrived: but to say the truth, I had it not in my power to wait; so I cut the matter short at once by determining to believe that the frequency of my letters will not make them a burthen to you. I did not know or suspect that Providence had so much good in store for me in the present life, as I promise myself now from the renewal of our intimacy. But it seems that my calculations upon that subject were erroneous; it is renewed: and I look forward to the permanence of it with the pleasantest expectations, and resolve to do all I can to deserve your punctual correspondence, by being as punctual as possible myself. *How easily are resolutions made and kept, when the whole heart is in them!*

Fifty things present themselves to me that I want to say, and while each pleads for the preference, they all together so distract my choice that I hardly know with which to begin.

I thank you, my dearest cousin, for your medical advice. I have tried other wines, but never could meet with any that I could drink constantly but port, without being the worse for it. And with respect to the quantity, that is a point that habit so effectually decides, that after many years practice, a limitation to a certain stint becomes in a manner necessary. When I have drank what I always drink, I can feel that more would disgust me. I have, indeed, a most troublesome stomach, and which does not improve as I grow older. I have eaten nothing for some time past that it has not quarrelled with, from my bread and butter in the morning down to the egg that I generally make my supper. It constrains me to deny my-

self some things that I am fond of, and some that are in a degree necessary to health, or that seem to be so. Green tea I have not touched these twenty years, or only to be poisoned by it: but bohea, which never hurts me, is so good a substitute, that I am perfectly well satisfied upon that head. Less easy, however, do I find it to reconcile myself to an almost total abstinence from all vegetables, which yet I have been obliged to practise for some time. But enough, and too much by half, upon a subject that shall never again engross so large a portion of the paper that I devote to you.

You supposed in a former letter that Mrs. Cowper, of Devonshire Street, has written to me since I saw the rest of the family. Not so, my dear. Whatever intelligence she gave you concerning me, she had it from the Newtons, whom she visits. Yourself were the last of my female relations that I saw before I went to St. Alban's. You do not forget, I dare say, that you and Sir Thomas called upon me in my chambers a very few days before I took leave of London: then it was that I saw you last, and then it was I said in my heart, upon your going out at the door, Farewell! there will be no more intercourse between us for ever. But Providence has ordered otherwise, and I cannot help saying once more, how sincerely I rejoice that he has. It were pity that, while the same world holds us, we, who were in a manner brought up together, should not love each other to the last. We do, however, and we do so in spite of a long separation; and although that separation should be for life, yet will we love each other.

I intended to have been very merry when I began,

but I stumbled unawares upon a subject that made me otherwise; but if I have been a little sad, yet not disagreeably so to myself. That you admire Mr. Pitt, my dear, may be, for aught I know, as you say it is, a very shining part of your character; but a more illustrious part of it, in my account, is your kindness and affection to me. Sweet self, you know, will always claim a right to be first considered, a claim which few people are much given to dispute. Upon the subject of politics you may make me just what you please. I am perfectly prepared to adopt all your opinions, for living when and as I do, it is impossible that I should have any decided ones of my own. My mind, therefore, is as much a *carte blanche* in this particular as you can wish. Write upon it what you please. I know well that I honoured his father, and that I have cut capers before now for victories obtained under his auspices; and although capering opportunities have become scarce since he died, yet I am equally ready even now to caper for his son when a reasonable occasion should offer. As to the King, I love and honour him upon a hundred accounts; and have, indeed, but one quarrel with him in the world; which is, that after having hunted a noble and beautiful animal, till he takes it perhaps at last in a lady's parlour, he in a few days turns it up and hunts it again. When stags are followed by such people as generally follow them, it is very well: their pursuers are men who do not pretend to much humanity, and when they discover none, they are perfectly consistent with themselves; but I have a far different opinion of the character of

our King: he is a merciful man, and should therefore be more merciful to his beast.

I admire and applaud your forgery, but your last was performed in such haste that the date did not much resemble the direction. I imagine, however, that, all things considered, the Post Office, should they detect your contrivance, would not be much disposed to take notice of it. It is a common practice, but seldom so justifiably practised as by you[1].

My dearest cousin, if you give me wine, there is no good reason wherefore you should also be at the expense of bottles, of which we could not possibly make any other use than to furnish the rack with them, where the cats would break them. I purpose, therefore, to return the hamper charged with the same number that it brings, by your permission. The difference will be sixteen shillings in the price of the wine.

Our post comes in on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays; on the two former days about breakfast time, and on Sundays, at this season at least, in the afternoon. Adieu, my dear; I am never happier, I think, than when I am reading your letters, or answering them.

Ever yours,

WM. C.

P. S. The kindness of that concern you take in the affairs of my stomach calls upon me to be a little more particular. I have tried Madeira, and find that it heats me in the night. Sherry I understand to be a

[1] The letter, no doubt, was franked in her father's name.

creator of appetite, which I do not want. I am taking bark and steel, from which I expect much. Mine is merely a case of relaxation.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Nov. 28, 1785.

In the first place, thanks for the cloth and muslin, which gave great satisfaction; and in the second, ditto thanks for your intelligence concerning my handsome escape, so far at least, out of the paws of the critics. You may rejoice with me, and I dare say will, that the door of patronage begins to open. My dear cousin, Lady Hesketh's connexions are many and polite; she undertakes, as you will see, to further my subscription with a readiness and warmth that leave me no room to doubt that my Proposals will be circulated as far as she can drive them. But this is not all. The Rev. Walter Bagot, who called on me two years ago, induced to it mainly by my first publication, in like manner induced by my second, has called upon me again. He has been here twice, and we expect him again with his wife, by her own desire, on Thursday or Friday next. At his last visit I imparted to him my design to publish a new English Homer by subscription. No man could receive such intelligence with more pleasure, nor is it possible to say with what a glow of friendship, or with how much uncommon alacrity he offered himself to my service, together with all his interest, which is important both for its weight and its extent. So far so good.

I am not immediately in need of the Odyssey: my correspondence with Lady Hesketh having been very frequent, has of late engaged much of my time, and is likely to do so. The day before yesterday I began Book XXIII. But send Ulysses when you can.

I would gladly gratify you by sending the part of the translation which you desire, although I could not commit it to the post without much anxiety, having, in fact, no other copy; for the first copy bears very little resemblance to the second all the way through. But there is an insuperable difficulty. If you reflect a moment you will be sensible of it. The quire being written book-fashion, the same sheet contains as much of what you do not want as of what you do: for instance, if I send you page one, I must also send you pages forty-one and forty-two, which are found on the corresponding side of the same sheet. I could not, therefore, send you enough, unless I sent you more than a frank would carry. We shall be truly glad to hear that Miss Shuttelworth is better. Adieu.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Nov. 30.

YOUR kindness reduces me to a necessity, (a pleasant one, indeed,) of writing all my letters in the same terms: always thanks,—thanks at the beginning, and thanks at the end. It is, however, I say, a pleasant employment when those thanks are indeed the language of the heart: and I can truly add, that there is no person on earth whom I thank with so much affec-

tion as yourself. You insisted that I should give you my genuine opinion of the wine. By the way, it arrived without the least damage or fracture, and I finished the first bottle of it this very day. It is excellent, and though the wine which I had been used to drink was not bad, far preferable to that. The bottles will be in town on Saturday. I am enamoured of the desk and of its contents before I see them. They will be most entirely welcome. A few years since I made Mrs. Unwin a present of a snuff-box—a silver one; the purchase was made in London by a friend; it is of a size and form that make it more fit for masculine than feminine use. She therefore with pleasure accepts the box which you have sent,—I should say with the greatest pleasure. And I, discarding the leathern trunk that I have used so long, shall succeed to the possession of hers. She says, Tell Lady Hesketh that I truly love and honour her. Now, my cousin, you may depend upon it, as a most certain truth, that these words from her lips are not an empty sound. I never in my life heard her profess a regard for any one that she felt not. She is not addicted to the use of such language upon ordinary occasions; but when she speaks it, speaks from the heart. She has baited me this many a day, even as a bear is baited, to send for Dr. Kerr. But, as I hinted to you upon a former occasion, I am as muleish as most men are, and have hitherto most gallantly refused; but what is to be done now?—If it were uncivil not to comply with the solicitations of one lady, to be unmoved by the solicitations of two would prove me to be a bear indeed. I will, therefore, summon him to consideration of said

stomach, and its ailments, without delay, and you shall know the result.—I have read Goldsmith's Traveller and his Deserted Village, and am highly pleased with them both, as well for the manner in which they are executed, as for their tendency, and the lessons that they inculcate.

Mrs. Unwin said to me a few nights since, after supper, "I have two fine fowls in feeding, and just fit for use; I wonder whether I should send them to Lady Hesketh?" I replied, Yes, by all means! and I will tell you a story that will at once convince you of the propriety of doing so. My brother was curate on a time to Mr. Fawkes, of Orpington, in Kent: it was when I lived in the Temple. One morning, as I was reading by the fireside, I heard a prodigious lumbering at the door. I opened it, and beheld a most rural figure, with very dirty boots, and a great coat as dirty. Supposing that my great fame as a barrister had drawn unto me a client from some remote region, I desired him to walk in. He did so, and introduced himself to my acquaintance by telling me that he was the farmer with whom my brother lodged at Orpington. After this preliminary information he unbuttoned his great coat, and I observed a quantity of long feathers projected from an inside pocket. He thrust in his hand, and with great difficulty extracted a great fat capon. He then proceeded to lighten the other side of him, by dragging out just such another, and begged my acceptance of both. I sent them to a tavern, where they were dressed, and I with two or three friends, whom I invited to the feast, found them incomparably better than any fowls that we had ever tasted from the

London coops. Now, said I to Mrs. Unwin, it is likely that the fowls at Olney may be as good as the fowls at Orpington, therefore send them; for it is not possible to make so good a use of them in any other way.

My dear, I have another story to tell you, but of a different kind. At Westminster School I was much intimate with Walter Bagot, a brother of Lord Bagot. In the course, as I suppose, of more than twenty years after we left school, I saw him but twice;—once when I called on him at Oxford, and once when he called on me in the Temple. He has a brother who lives about four miles from hence, a man of large estate. It happened that soon after the publication of my first volume, he came into this country on a visit to his brother. Having read my book, and liking it, he took that opportunity to renew his acquaintance with me. I felt much affection for him, and the more because it was plain that after so long a time he still retained his for me. He is now at his brother's; twice has he visited me in the course of the last week, and this morning he brought Mrs. Bagot with him. He is a good and amiable man, and she a most agreeable woman. At this second visit I made him acquainted with my translation of Homer: he was highly pleased to find me so occupied, and with all that glow of friendship that would make it criminal in me to doubt his sincerity for a moment, insisted upon being employed in promoting the subscription, and engaged himself and all his connexions, which are extensive, and many of them of high rank, in my service. His

chariot put up at an inn in the town while he was here, and I rather wondered that at his departure he chose to walk to his chariot, and not to be taken up at the door; but when he had been gone about a quarter of an hour his servant came with a letter his master had written at the inn, and which, he said, required no answer. I opened it, and found as follows;—

MY GOOD FRIEND, Olney, Nov. 30, 1785.

You will oblige me by accepting this early subscription to your Homer, even before you have fixed your plan and price; which when you have done, if you will send me a parcel of your subscription papers, I will endeavour to circulate them among my friends and acquaintance as far as I can. Health and happiness attend you.

Yours ever,

WALTER BAGOT.

N. B. It contained a draft for twenty pounds.

My dearest cousin, for whom I feel more than I can say, I once more thank you for all; which reminds me by the way of thanking you in particular for your offer of oysters. I am very fond of them, and few things agree better with me, when they are stewed without butter. You may perceive that I improve upon your hands, and grow less and less coy in the matter of acceptance continually.

In a letter of Mr. Unwin's to his mother he says thus: "I have been gratified to-day by the high cha-

racter given of my friend's poem in the Critical Review." So far, therefore, I have passed the pikes. The Monthly Critics have not yet noticed me.

Adieu, my faithful, kind, and consolatory friend!

Ever, ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 3, 1785.

I AM glad to hear that there is such a demand for your last Narrative. If I may judge of their general utility by the effect that they have heretofore had upon me, there are few things more edifying than death-bed memoirs. They interest every reader, because they speak of a period at which all must arrive, and afford a solid ground of encouragement to survivors to expect the same, or similar support and comfort, when it shall be their turn to die.

I also am employed in writing narrative, but not so useful. Employment, however, and with the pen, is, through habit, become essential to my well-being; and to produce always original poems, especially of considerable length, is not so easy. For some weeks after I had finished the Task, and sent away the last sheet corrected, I was through necessity idle, and suffered not a little in my spirits for being so. One day, being in such distress of mind as was hardly supportable, I took up the Iliad; and merely to divert attention, and with no more preconception of what I was then entering upon, than I have at this moment of what I shall be doing this day twenty years hence,

translated the twelve first lines of it. The same necessity pressing me again, I had recourse to the same expedient, and translated more. Every day bringing its occasion for employment with it, every day consequently added something to the work; till at last I began to reflect thus:—The Iliad and the Odyssey together consists of about forty thousand verses. To translate these forty thousand verses will furnish me with occupation for a considerable time. I have already made some progress, and I find it a most agreeable amusement. Homer, in point of purity, is a most blameless writer; and, though he was not an enlightened man, has interspersed many great and valuable truths throughout both his poems. In short, he is in all respects a most venerable old gentleman, by an acquaintance with whom no man can disgrace himself. The literati are all agreed to a man, that, although Pope has given us two pretty poems under Homer's titles, there is not to be found in them the least portion of Homer's spirit, nor the least resemblance of his manner. I will try, therefore, whether I cannot copy him somewhat more happily myself. I have at least the advantage of Pope's faults and failings, which, like so many buoys upon a dangerous coast, will serve me to steer by, and will make my chance for success more probable. These and many other considerations, but especially a mind that abhorred a vacuum as its chief bane, impelled me so effectually to the work, that ere long I mean to publish proposals for a subscription to it, having advanced so far as to be warranted in doing so. I have connexions, and no few such, by means of which I have

the utmost reason to expect that a brisk circulation may be procured; and if it should prove a profitable enterprise, the profit will not accrue to a man who may be said not to want it. It is a business such as it will not, indeed, lie much in your way to promote; but, among your numerous connexions, it is possible that you may know some who would sufficiently interest themselves in such a work to be not unwilling to subscribe to it. I do not mean—far be it from me—to put you upon making hazardous applications, where you might possibly incur a refusal, that would give you though but a moment's pain. You know best your own opportunities and powers in such a cause. If you can do but little, I shall esteem it much; and if you can do nothing, I am sure that it will not be for want of a will.

I have lately had three visits from my old schoolfellow Mr. Bagot, a brother of Lord Bagot, and of Mr. Chester of Chicheley. At his last visit he brought his wife with him, a most amiable woman, to see Mrs. Unwin. I told him my purpose, and my progress. He received the news with great pleasure; immediately subscribed a draft of twenty pounds; and promised me his whole heart, and his whole interest, which lies principally among people of the first fashion.

My correspondence has lately also been renewed with my dear cousin Lady Hesketh, whom I ever loved as a sister, (for we were in a manner brought up together,) and who writes to me as affectionately as if she were so. She also enters into my views and interests upon this occasion with a warmth that gives me

great encouragement. The circle of *her* acquaintance is likewise very extensive; and I have no doubt that she will exert her influence to its utmost possibilities among them. I have other strings to my bow, (perhaps, as a translator of Homer, I should say, to my lyre,) which I cannot here enumerate; but, upon the whole, my prospect seems promising enough. I have not yet consulted Johnson upon the occasion, but intend to do it soon.

My spirits are somewhat better than they were. In the course of the last month, I have perceived a very sensible amendment. The hope of better days seems again to dawn upon me; and I have now and then an intimation, though slight and transient, that God has not abandoned me for ever.

We have paid Nat. Gee his interest, and I enclose his acknowledgement. His last, was so effectually mislaid that we have never found it. Mrs. Unwin, who sends her love, begs that you will pay out of that sum, for the newspapers, and remit, if you can think of it, the few shillings that will remain, by the first that shall call upon you in his way to Olney. She is sorry that she forgot the greens.

This last paragraph must be considered as in a parenthesis, for I am going back to the subject of the preceding, viz. myself. Having been for some years troubled with an inconvenient stomach; and lately, with a stomach that will digest nothing without help; and we having reached the bottom of our own medical skill, into which we have dived to little or no purpose; I have at length consented to consult Dr. Kerr, and expect to see him in a day or two. Engaged as I am,

and am likely to be, so long as I am capable of it, in writing for the press, I cannot well afford to entertain a malady that is such an enemy to all mental operations.

The morning is beautiful, and tempts me forth into the garden. It is all the walk that I can have at this season, but not all the exercise. I ring a peal every day upon the dumb-bells.

I am, my dear friend, most truly,
Yours and Mrs. Newton's,
W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Dec. 6, 1785.

I WRITE not *upon* my desk, but *about* it. Having in vain expected it by the waggon that followed your letter, I again expected it by the next; and thinking it likely that it might arrive last night at Sherrington, I sent a man over thither this morning, hoping to see him return with it; but again I am disappointed. I have felt an impatience to receive it that you yourself have taught me, and now think it necessary to let you know that it is not come, lest it should perhaps be detained in London, by the negligence of somebody to whom you might entrust the packing of it, or its carriage to the inn.

I shall be obliged to be more concise than I choose to be when I write to you, for want of time to indulge myself in writing more. How, will you say, can a man want time, who lives in the country, with business, and without neighbours, who visits n

and who is visited himself so seldom? My dear, I have been at the races this morning, and have another letter to write this evening; the post sets out at seven, and it is now drawing near to six. A fine day, you will say, for the races, and the better, no doubt, because it has rained continually ever since the morning. At what races do you suppose that I have been? I might leave you to guess, but loving you too well to leave you under the burthen of an employment that must prove for ever vain, I will even tell you, and keep you no longer in suspense. I have been at Troy, where the principal heroes of the Iliad have been running for such a prize as our jockeys would disdain to saddle a horse for; and yet I assure you they acquitted themselves most nobly, though a kettle and a frying-pan were to reward their labours.

I never answered your question concerning my strong partiality to a common. I well remember making the speech of which you remind me, and the very place where I made it was upon a common, in the neighbourhood of Southampton, the name of which, however, I have forgot. But I perfectly recollect that I boasted of the sagacity that you mention just after having carried you over a dirty part of the road that led to it. My nostrils have hardly been regaled with those wild odours from that day to the present. We have no such here. If there ever were any such in this country, the enclosures have long since destroyed them; but we have a scent in the fields about Olney, that to me is equally agreeable, and which, even after attentive examination, I have never been able to account for. It proceeds, so far as I can

find, neither from herb, nor tree, nor shrub: I should suppose therefore that it is in the soil. It is exactly the scent of amber when it has been rubbed hard, only more potent. I have never observed it except in hot weather, or in places where the sun shines powerfully, and from which the air is excluded. I had a strong poetical desire to describe it when I was writing the Common-scene in the Task, but feared lest the unfrequency of such a singular property in the earth, should have tempted the reader to ascribe it to a fanciful nose, at least to have suspected it for a deliberate fiction.

I have been as good as my word, and have sent for the doctor; but having left him the whole week to choose out of, am uncertain on what day I shall fall under his consideration. I have been in his company. He is quite a gentleman, and a very sensible one; and as to skill in his profession, I suppose that he has few superiors.

Mrs. Unwin, (who begs to be mentioned to you with affectionate respect,) sits knitting my stockings at my elbow, with a degree of industry worthy of Penelope herself. You will not think this an exaggeration when I tell you that I have not bought a pair these twenty years, either of thread, silk, or worsted.

Adieu, my most beloved cousin; if you get this before I have an answer to my last, let me soon have an answer to them both.

Truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN, Dec. 7.

AT this time last night I was writing to you, and now I am writing to you again. Had our correspondence been renewed a year ago, it is possible that, having found a more agreeable employment, it might never have occurred to me to translate Homer for my amusement. I have no doubt that my friend Bagot will do his utmost to circulate my proposals. There is a warmth in his manner, and he takes an interest in the success of my enterprise that leaves me without excuse if I should doubt it. But his sphere of influence and yours are entirely distinct. He will recommend me to the men, and you, I suppose, principally to the ladies. The literati will probably have some curiosity to see in what manner I have conducted an attempt in which Pope went before me; but after all, a translation of Homer must be chiefly a lady's book. It just presents itself to me to ask if Mr. Arnott, whose name I have not heard these many years, except from my own lips, be of your connexions? He, I should suppose, has pretty extensive ones himself, and for certain reasons would not unwillingly contribute what he could to the furtherance of a work undertaken by a man who bears my name. But all these matters I leave entirely to your discretion, as secure both of that and your zeal to serve me, as if I were at your side throughout all the business. By the way, a neighbour of ours being this day at Newport, saw a letter addressed to me in the window of the inn, and delivered it to me while I was at dinner.

It proved to be a letter from Mr. Bagot, which he had left there in his way home, in hope that it would find a bearer. It is conceived in terms altogether worthy of the friendship that he professes for me, and contains a fresh assurance of his exertions in my favour as soon as I shall have sent him my proposals. He is a man of taste and of learning, and sees as plainly as I that there is a fair opening for such a work. My intention is to write to Johnson, my publisher, in the course of a few days, in order to settle with him the necessary preliminaries; which done, I shall order him to put the Proposals to the press immediately. The season is favourable,—London is full, or will be so by the time when they shall be ready, which will hardly be till after the holidays, and by that time, if nothing hinders, I shall have finished the Iliad. I shall then revise it carefully, comparing it all the way with the original, and shall have given it the last hand probably by the month of March. It is likewise probable that by the month of March we shall have felt our ground a little, and be able to form a reasonable judgement how far the subscription will be likely to fill. For so expensive a business must not be finally determined upon till that be known. If the subscription should fail of the needful amount, I am but where I was, and shall have nothing to do but to return the money, and to comfort myself with reflecting that I have not thrown away another year in translating the Odyssey also. But though not naturally addicted to much rashness in making conclusions favourable to myself, I have a certain lightness of heart upon the

subject, that encourages me to hope for, and to expect a very different event.

My dear, you say not a word about the desk in your last, which I received this morning. I infer from your silence that you supposed it either at Olney or on its way thither, and that you expected nothing so much as that my next would inform you of its safe arrival;—therefore, where can it possibly be? I am not absolutely in despair about it, for the reasons that I mentioned last night; but to say the truth, I stand tottering upon the verge of it. I write, and have written these many years, upon a book of maps, which I now begin to find too low and too flat, though till I expected a better desk, I found no fault with *them*. See and observe how true it is, that by increasing the number of our conveniencies, we multiply our wants exactly in the same proportion! neither can I at all doubt that if you were to tell me that all the men in London of any fashion at all, wore black velvet shoes with white roses, and should also tell me that you would send me such, I should dance with impatience till they arrived. Not because I care one farthing of what materials my shoes are made, but because any shoes of your sending would interest me from head to foot.

I have never had the pleasure to see Mr. Jekyll, and probably never shall. I have been repeatedly at Gayhurst; but we went only to amuse ourselves with a walk in the pleasure-grounds when the family were out. I was last year in company with Mrs. Wright. We met at Mr. Throckmorton's, and were both highly

pleased with her; but Mr. Wright himself is such a keen sportsman that he would doubtless find me a most insipid animal, who have not the least relish of what he admires so much. For the same reason as well as for some others, I have never had a connexion in the visiting way with any other of the gentlemen in the country. With Mr. Throckmorton indeed I had liked to have formed acquaintance last year, but he left the country soon after we began to know each other, and is in general so little at home that I have no room left to suppose I shall ever know him better.

Mrs. Unwin, my dearest cousin, is *overgoved*, (you remember that word,) that the *pullen*, (you remember that also,) proved so good. She begs me also to say how sensible she is of your kind offer to execute any of her commissions in town; but to say *how* sensible she is of it, would take up more room than I can spare at present, for which reason I decline it. I allot the rest of my paper to Dr. Kerr, whom I shall expect to see to-morrow, or shall conclude that my letter has not reached him. Good night, therefore, my dear! I will fill up the little space that remains when I shall either have to tell you that I have *seen him, or must* write to him again. I am on the *same account obliged* to postpone my answer to *certain passages in your last*, to another opportunity.

Thursday evening.

Oh that this letter had wings, that it might fly to tell you that my desk, the most elegant, the compactest, the most commodious desk in the world, and of all the desks that ever were or the

desk that I love the most, is safe arrived. Nay, my dear, it was actually at Sherrington, when the waggoner's wife, (for the man himself was not at home,) croaked out her abominable *No!* yet she examined the bill of lading, but either did it so carelessly, or as poor Dick Madan used to say, with such an *ignorant eye*, that my name escaped her. My precious cousin, you have bestowed too much upon me. I have nothing to render you in return, but the affectionate feelings of a heart most truly sensible of your kindness. How pleasant it is to write upon such a green bank! I am sorry that I have so nearly reached the end of my paper. I have now however only room to say that Mrs. Unwin is delighted with her box, and bids me do more than thank you for it. What can I do more at this distance but say that she loves you heartily, and that so do I? The pocket-book is also the completest that I ever saw, and the watch-chain the most brilliant.

Adieu for a little while. Now for Homer.

My dear, yours,

WM. C.

N. B. I generally write the day before the post sets out, which is the thing that puzzles you. I do it that I may secure time for the purpose, and may not be hurried. On this very day twenty-two years ago left I London.

TO LADY HESKETH.

DEAREST COUSIN, Thursday, Dec. 15, 1785.

My desk is always pleasant, but never so pleasant as when I am writing to you. If I am not obliged to you for the thing itself, at least I am for your having decided the matter against me, and resolving that it should come in spite of all my objections. Before it arrived, Mrs. Unwin had spied out for it a place that exactly suits it. A certain fly-table in the corner of the room, which I had overlooked, affords it a convenient stand when it is not wanted, and it is easily transferred to a larger when it is. If I must not know to whom I am principally indebted for it, at least let me entreat you to make my acknowledgements of gratitude and love. As to my frequent use of it, I will tell you how that matter stands. When I was writing my first volume, and was but just beginning to emerge from a state of melancholy that had continued some years, (from which, by the way, I do not account myself even now delivered,) Mrs. Unwin insisted on my relinquishing the pen, apprehending consequences injurious to my health. When ladies insist, you know, there is an end of the business; obedience on our part becomes necessary. I accordingly obeyed, but having lost my fiddle, I became pensive and unhappy; she therefore restored it to me, convinced of its utility, and from that day to this I have never ceased to scrape. Observe, however, my dear, that I scrape not always. My task that I assign myself is to translate forty lines a day; if th off easily I sometimes make them fifty, but rt of the

allotted number. Perhaps I am occupied an hour and a half, perhaps three hours; but generally between two and three. This, you see, is labour that can hurt no man; and what I have translated in the morning, in the evening I transcribe.

Imagine not that I am so inhuman as to send you into the field with no coadjutor but Mr. Bagot. He is indeed one of my great dependencies, but I have others, and not inconsiderable ones besides. Mr. Unwin is of course hearty in my cause, and he has several important connexions. I have, by his means originally, an acquaintance, though by letters only, with Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. My whole intercourse with my bookseller has hitherto been carried on through the medium of his parliamentary privilege. He is pleased to speak very handsomely of my books, and, I doubt not, will assist my subscription with ardour. John Thornton the great, who together with his three sons, all three in parliament, has, I suppose, a larger sweep in the city than any man, will, I have reason to hope, be equally zealous in my favour. Mr. Newton, who has a large influence in that quarter also, will, I know, serve me like a brother. I have also exchanged some letters with Mr. Bacon, the statuary, whose connexions must needs be extensive, and who, if I may judge from the sentiments that he expresses towards me, will not be backward in my service. Neither have I any doubt but that I can engage Lord Dartmouth. These, my dearest cousin, except the last, (and I mention it for your greater comfort,) are all, to a man, Pittites. Mr. Smith, in particular, is one of the minister's most

intimate friends, and was with him when the turnpike-man had like to have spoiled him for a premier for ever. All this I have said by way of clapping you on the back, not wondering that your poor heart ached at the idea of being almost a solitary Lady Errant on the occasion.

With respect to the enterprise itself, there are certain points of delicacy that will not suffer me to make a public justification of it. It would ill become me avowedly to point out the faults of Pope in a preface, and would be as impolitic as indecent. But to you, my dear, I can utter my mind freely. Let me premise, however, that you answered the gentleman's inquiry, whether in blank verse or not, to a marvel. It is even so: and let some critics say what they will, I aver it, and will for ever aver it, that to give a just representation of Homer in rhyme, is a natural impossibility. Now for Pope himself:—I will allow his whole merit. He has written a great deal of very musical and sweet verse in his translation of Homer, but his verse is not universally such; on the contrary, it is often lame, feeble, and flat. He has, besides, occasionally a felicity of expression peculiar to himself; but it is a felicity purely modern, and has nothing to do with Homer. Except the Bible, there never was in the world a book so remarkable for that species of the sublime that owes its very existence to simplicity, as the works of Homer. He is always nervous, plain, natural. I refer you to your own knowledge of his copyist for a decision upon Pope's merits in these particulars. The garden in all the gaiety of June is less flowery than his Translation. Metaphors of

which Homer never dreamt, which he did not seek, and which probably he would have disdained if he had found, follow each other in quick succession like the sliding pictures in a show box. Homer is, on occasions that call for such a style, the easiest and most familiar of all writers: a circumstance that escaped Pope entirely, who takes most religious care that he shall every where strut in buckram. The speeches of his heroes are often animated to a degree that Pope no doubt accounted unmannerly and rude, for he has reduced numbers of them that are of that character to the perfect standard of French good-breeding. Shakespeare himself did not excel Homer in discrimination of character, neither is he more attentive to exact consistence and preservation of it throughout. In Pope, to whatever cause it was owing, whether he did not see it, or seeing it, accounted it an affair of no moment, this great beauty is almost absolutely annihilated. In short, my dear, there is hardly any thing in the world so unlike another, as Pope's version of Homer to the original. Give me a great corking pin that I may stick your faith upon my sleeve. There—it is done. Now assure yourself, upon the credit of a man who made Homer much his study in his youth, and who is perhaps better acquainted with Pope's translation of him than almost any man, having twenty-five years ago compared them with each other line by line throughout; upon the credit of a man, too, who would not for the world deceive you in the smallest matter, that Pope never entered into the spirit of Homer, that he never translated him, I had almost said, did not understand him: many passages it is literally true that

he did not. Why, when he first entered on his task, did he, (as he did, by his own confession,) for ever dream that he was wandering in unknown ways, that he was lost upon heaths and forests, and awoke in terror? I will tell you, my dear, his dreams were emblems of his waking experience; and I am mistaken, if I could not go near to prove that at his first setting out, he knew very little of Greek, and was never an adept in it, to the last. Therefore, my beloved cousin, once more take heart. I have a fair opportunity to acquire honour; and if when I have finished the Iliad, I do not upon cool consideration think that I have secured it, I will burn the copy.

A hundred things must go unanswered, but not the oysters unacknowledged, which are remarkably fine. Again I leave space for Kerr, not having seen him yet. I cannot go to him now, lest we *should meet in the midway between.*

Saturday.

I must now huddle up twenty matters in a corner. No Kerr yet: a report prevails in our town that he is very ill, and I am very sorry if he is. I were no better than a beast could I forget to thank you for an order of oysters through the season. I love you for all your kindnesses, and for this among the rest. I wrote lately to Johnson on the subject of Homer. He is a knowing man in his trade, and understands booksellers' trap as well as any man. He wishes me not to publish by subscription, but to put my copy into his hands. He thinks he can make me such proposals as I shall like. I shall answer him to-day, and not

depart from my purpose. But I consider his advice as a favourable omen. The last post brought me a very obliging letter from the abovesaid Mr. Smith. I shall answer it to-day, and shall make my intended application for his interest in behalf of my subscription. I always take care to have sufficient exercise every day. When the weather forbids walking, I ring a thousand bob-majors upon the dumb-bells. You would be delighted to see the performance. Again, I say that I love you, and I do so in particular for the interest that you took in the success of the passages that you say were read in the evening party that you mention. I know the friendly warmth of your heart, and how valuable a thing it is to have a share in it. The hare was caught by a shepherd's-dog that had not the fear of the law before his eyes; was transferred by the shepherd to the clerk of the parish, and by him presented to us. Mrs. Unwin is ever deeply sensible of your kind remembrances of her. Her son is sometimes in Town, and if you permit him, will, I doubt not, rejoice to give a morning rap at your door, upon the first intimation of such permission from me, whenever opportunity shall offer.

Now farewell, my dearest cousin, and deservedly my most beloved friend, farewell.

With true affection yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

THE long-expected visitor has at length appeared. On Sunday, at two o'clock, in came Kerr, having taken the very first opportunity that great pain, and indisposition, the consequence of it, afforded him. The poor man has been a great sufferer, as his looks declare, and when I had heard the whole matter I did not wonder at it. The original hurt, indeed, was trivial, but having occasion, the next morning after the squirrel bit him, to lance a tumour for a patient in the infirmary, the contents of which were infectious, and the matter of it happening to come in contact with the small puncture that Scrug had made in his finger, a terrible inflammation ensued, and he expected nothing less than that the finger must have been cut off. Even when he was here, he was in pain, and had a considerable swelling upon his shoulder, and another under his arm. I relate the story for his justification, because it accounts but too satisfactorily for his delay.

As for myself, he catechized me on the subject of my own case with so much accuracy of intelligence as proved him perfect master of all my sensations and uneasinesses, before I told them. Which having done, he in a moment enabled me to understand it also. My stomach, he says, of which all my complaint is made, is in itself a very good stomach, and by no means in fault *originally*. But it has the misfortune to belong to a habit, the juices of which are in an acrid and unhealthy state; that these juices occasion a little lurking fever, from which I am never free, and

being transmitted into the stomach through the coats of it, make a regular digestion impossible. That all these mischiefs, from the first to the last, proceed from an obstruction of insensible perspiration. I am therefore to proceed as follows: imprimis, in order to set the said insensible discharge going again, I am to furnish myself with half a dozen flannel waistcoats,—not to be worn all at once, my dear, far from it, but one at a time, and next my personage: secondly, I am to take (oh terrible!) an emetic weekly; when I find myself a little better, every fortnight, and less frequently as matters mend with me, till at length I shall get excused for one in three months: thirdly, he has prescribed for me a tincture, a spoonful of which I am to take in peppermint tea about noon, and another at going to bed. And lastly, I am to drink no wine at night, but, instead of my usual supper, am to regale myself with half a pint of oatmeal gruel, made very good with spice, and into which he graciously admits four table spoonfuls of brown port. I should have a restlessness in the night, he said, for about a fortnight perhaps, on foregoing the glass to which I had been always accustomed, but that then I should sleep the better for it. Herein, however, he has been happily a little mistaken, for I have used it two nights and have slept much more than usual. Thus you see, my dear, that drinking lying-in lady's liquor I am likely soon to be as well *as can be expected.*

Mrs. Unwin makes my caudle, and, by the Doctor's own desire, my tincture also; for he said she would be more exact than the apothecaries (in which he said true), and that much depended on exactness. It

happens luckily enough that, being much a gardener, I have a hot-bed newly made, for something like a sand-heat being necessary, in order to digest the ingredients properly, and there being nothing of the sort at any of our physical people's in the town, a hot-bed is the only thing in the world to supply the deficiency. I am to let him know in about three weeks what progress I make in the way of amendment, and he will answer me; and when his business shall at any time bring him this way, will be sure to call.

And now, my dear, I have given you plentiful information upon the subject—must not however forget to add what it is a comfort to me to know that you will be glad to hear, that when Mrs. Unwin asked him in my absence (for I happened to leave the room a moment) whether he thought I should soon recover health again, he answered that he saw no reason to doubt it.

[Part of this letter has been cut off.]

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 24, 1785.

You would have found a letter from me at Mr. Smith's, according to your assignation, had not the post, setting out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me. The Odyssey that you sent has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is, that I cannot read it. The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Hom

was himself. I am now in the last book of the Iliad; shall be obliged to you therefore for a more legible one by the first opportunity.

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription; and he desired me in his answer not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him; adding, that he could make me such offers, as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr. Smith, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very obliging and encouraging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such length and moment, but such as at the same time I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let me sing the praises of the desk which my dear cousin has sent me. In general, it is as elegant as possible. In particular, it is of cedar, beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome small chest, contains all sorts of accommodations, is furnished with cut glass for ink and sand, and is hinged, handled, and mounted with silver. It is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of a

reading-desk. It came stored with stationary of all sorts, and this splendid sheet is a part of it. The snuff box, a present to your mother, is also very handsome. French paper, with a gold hinge, and bordered with an inlay of *concatenated gold*, as the Gods call it, but as men, with a gold chain.

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Dec. 24, 1785.

TILL I had made such a progress in my present undertaking, as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should proceed in, and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends that I had an arduous enterprise in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer, is notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me, that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consideration induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Dec. 31, 1785.

YOU have learned from my last that I am now conducting myself upon the plan that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negotiation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I can make up a complete list of the personages and persons to whom I would have them sent; which in a few days I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson behaves very well, at least according to my conception of the matter, and seems sensible that I have dealt liberally with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome in my pocket," and recommends two large quartos for the whole. He would not (he says) by any means advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas; the half, as usual, to be paid at the time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery. Five hundred names (he adds) at this price will put above a thousand pounds into my purse. I am doing my best to obtain them. I have written, I think, to all my quondam friends, except those that are dead, requiring their assistance. I have gulped and swallowed, and I have written to the Chancellor, and I have written to Colman. I now bring them both to a fair test. They can both serve me most materially if so disposed. Mr. Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little. I have

of course written to Mr. Bagot, who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection entreated me so to do, as soon as I should have settled the conditions. If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once in his company since I left Westminster, where he and I read the Iliad and Odyssey through together. I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application, which I will get you to show to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her. I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her, during your present stay in town. You observe therefore that I am not wanting to myself; he that is so, has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have any cause to complain of me in other respects. I thank you for your friendly hints, and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen. I respect the public, and I respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either. I hate the affectation so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness; and in the present case am sensible how especially necessary it is to shun them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me. I thank you for all that you have said and done in my cause, and beforehand for all that you shall say and do hereafter. I am sure that there will be no deficiency on your part. In particular I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honour and respectability, when the Mann you mention applied for samples of my translation. When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse

never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me that his wife had longed.

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter in behalf of so many who must otherwise have been exposed to it. I wish that you could make a general gaol-delivery, leaving only those behind who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of. You never said a better thing in your life, than when you assured Mr. Smith of the expediency of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts, with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided. When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair for her six children; as soon as the children saw them, they jumped out of their straw, caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions, of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other.

It just occurs to me, to say, that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the end of February. I shall have finished the Iliad in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revisal of the whole. You must, if possible, come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take the charge of

its safe delivery to Johnson. For if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone,—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second.

Your mother joins with me in love and good wishes of every kind, to you, and all yours.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO THE REV. MATTHEW POWLEY, DEWSBURY, NEAR LEEDS[1].

DEAR SIR, [About 1786.]

You judge wisely, I believe; it is certainly best that we should cease to discuss a matter which neither you nor I are qualified to adjust. It is very possible that I might misstate a circumstance which happened so long ago as last March twelve-month, for I keep no letters, except such as are recommended for preservation by the importance of their contents, and consequently had none to refer to. By *important contents*, I mean what is commonly called *business* of some sort or other. In the destruction of all other epistles I consult the good of my friends; for I account it a point of delicacy not to leave behind me, when I die, such bundles of their communications as I otherwise should, for the inspection of I know not whom; and as I deal with theirs, for the very same reason, I most heartily wish them all to deal with mine. In fact, there seems to be no more reason for perpetuating or preserving what passes the pen in the course of a common corre-

[1] For this Letter I am obliged to Mr. Clarke, of New Bond Street, to whom the original was given by Mr. Powley.

spondence, than what passes the lips in every day's conversation. A thousand folios of the latter are forgotten without any regret; and octavos, at least, of the former are frequently treasured till death, for no use whatever either to ourselves or others. They then, perhaps, go to the grocer's, and serve to amuse such of his customers as can read *written hand*, as they call it; or now and then, which is fifty times worse, they find their way to the press; a misfortune which never, at least seldom, fails to happen, if the deceased has been so unfortunate as to leave behind him a friend more affectionate to his memory than discreet in his choice of means to honour it.

I have run on thus long on a subject which I did not purpose to have mentioned when I began, merely for lack of news. You have received, I presume, by this time, Mr. Newton's last publication. I am reading it, but, as I read aloud, proceed not very rapidly, for I have not lungs to hold forth long; consequently I have made no great progress. The letters seem, however, by what I have seen of them, to hold out an example of a kind of which I have seen many, and which proves that a man may truly love and serve God, and yet have a snug little idol in a corner of his heart at the same time.

Is it possible to love *much* without loving *too much?* I never could. My experience has always answered —No.

Mr. Postlethwaite is come to serve for Mr. Bean, who has rambled westward, either to Bath or Bristol, or both. The aforesaid is about to publish a Grammar, in which he proposes to go beyond Lowth and Beattie.

I am a subscriber, and you may be so if you please. The price is to be three shillings. No great matter for settling the claims of twelve tenses. What they can be I am not at present able to imagine. Half of the number are as many, I believe, as I ever use myself.

Mrs. U. unites with me in love to you both, and I remain, sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR,

I HAVE a neighbour at Newport Pagnell, the Rev. Mr. Bull, master of an academy there, a man of genius, fine taste, and consummate erudition,—I will say of him, that he has few if any superiors in learning in this country. He is my intimate friend, and dines with us once a fortnight the year round. To him I have already read a part of my translation, and should be ashamed to repeat the terms in which he praised it. If any difficulty should occur, he is my Delphic oracle, to which I shall resort. He is affectionately at my service, and his erudition is a bank upon which I can draw at pleasure. What interest he has is mine also, and he has already sent me names that will do honour to my list of subscribers.

Would you advise me to write to the Madans, Martin and Spencer? Of the former, I have heard that my Task is his theme in all companies; but that terrible book of his has made me more than half afraid to meddle with him, lest he should tease me for

my opinion of it, in which case I should be obliged to execrate it even to his face. I gave him a broad look of disapprobation in my Progress of Error, and he was the only man who did not comprehend my purpose,—at least, he seemed insensible of it. I have learned from good authority that his connexions are most of them broken, and that since the publication, he has lived perforce pretty much to himself. So far, therefore, as he alone is concerned, it might not be worth while to trouble him; but my dear Doctor of Buttercram would, I dare say, serve me to his utmost, and must have pretty extensive interest, especially among the clergy. Yet to him I cannot make application, unless I apply to Martin also, without hurting the latter more than I would wish.—Advise me.

Does dedication to King or Queen import any thing like an obligation for Author to present Author's book with Author's own hands? If so, woe to mine Authorship, for it cannot be done. I would not dedicate to the Emperor of the Moon upon those conditions, though he should promise me Mount Saint Catherine for my reward.

You did perfectly well, my dear, to make Task take the lead of his elder brother, when their attendance on the General was in question. The first volume is a confession of my faith, concerning which he will probably not feel himself greatly interested; but the second, giving some account of my manner of life, together with other diverting matters, may possibly please him. I shall be glad if it should, for I know him to be a man of excellent taste; but at the same time do not expect him to say much.

Hours and hours and hours have I spent in endeavours altogether fruitless to trace the writer of the letter that I send, by a minute examination of the character, and never did it strike me till this moment that your father wrote it. In the style I discover him, in the scoring of the emphatical words—his never-failing practice, in the formation of many of the letters, and in the adieu! at the bottom so plainly, that I could hardly be more convinced had I seen him write it. Tell me, my dearest cousin, if you are not of my mind? How much am I bound to love him if it be so! Always much, but in that case, if possible, more than ever.

Farewell, thou beloved daughter of my beloved anonymous uncle.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Monday, Jan. 2, 1786.

BE under no concern about me or my stomach. The remedy is certainly a most detestable affair, but when taken early in the morning, and without slip-slops, is attended with less labour than could be supposed.

If I did not know that you have a better taste than ninety-nine readers in a hundred, whether of your sex or ours, I should have less pleasure than I have in your approbation. One thing is to be considered, I did not always read Pope's translation with so critical an eye as lately; if, therefore, I spy blemishes that escape you, it is not to be ascribed to my better

judgement, but to that closeness of attention that the occasion naturally inspires. I well remember when the lines which have charmed you so long, delighted me as much; and had I not at last examined them by the light of Homer's lamp, their defects, to this moment, had been hidden from me; such a fascinating command of language was Pope endued with. But Homer's accuracy of description, and his exquisite judgement never, never failed him. He never, I believe, in a single instance sacrificed beauty to embellishment. He does not deal in hyperbole, (a figure so frequently occurring in his translator, that one would imagine it Homer's favourite one;) accordingly, when he describes nature, whether in man or in animal, or whether nature inanimate, you may always trust him for the most consummate fidelity. It is his great glory that he omits no striking part of his subject, and that he never inserts a tittle that does not belong to it. Oh! how unlike some describers that I have met with, of modern days, who smother you with words, words, words, and then think that they have copied nature; when all the while nature was an object either not looked at, or not sufficiently: as if a painter, having a beautiful woman to draw, should give you, indeed, something like the outline of her face, but should fill it up with all the colours of the rainbow.

Your letter, my dearest cousin, gave me the greatest pleasure: it is full of matter that could not fail to do so. So indeed are all yours; for which reason it is that I ever wait with impatience for them. But I was

especially pleased with what you say of General Cowper. Before I say more about him, let me premise that I have followed your good counsel, and that an epistle to him, of pretty handsome length, will set out by the same post that takes charge of this. The subjects of it are merely an explanation of my motives to this enterprise, and an application to him for his interest and assistance.

I know not how it could happen that my brother should have been so misinformed, but misinformed he must have been, and on the following occasion. Very soon after I had taken up my quarters at Mr. Unwin's at Huntingdon, I received a letter from your dear father, giving me to understand, though in the gentlest terms, and in such as *he* was sure to choose, that the family were not a little displeased at having learned that I kept a servant, and that I *maintained* a boy whom I had carried thither with me from St. Alban's. I have not room here to relate what passed between me and my uncle, nor the reasons by which my conduct in those two articles had been determined. It is sufficient to say, that I did not alter my plan, though my uncle told me, as softly as he could, that there was danger lest the offence taken by my relations should operate to the prejudice of my income. I cannot proceed in my narrative without taking the opportunity to say, that at this moment it was, though I had not been ten months in the family, that Mrs. Unwin generously offered me my place under her roof, with all the same accommodations, (and undertook to manage that matter with her husband,) at half the stipulated payment. You may be sure that I made my brother

privy to this business. Soon after my uncle and I had exchanged two or three letters about it, and I had ceased to hear any more of the matter, my brother went to town, where his stay was short, and when I saw him next, he gave me the following intelligence. That my cousin, mentioned above, had been the mover of this storm; that finding me inflexible, he had convened the family on the occasion, had recommended it to them not to give to one who knew so little how to make a right use of their bounty, and declared, for his own part, that he would not; and that he had accordingly withdrawn his contribution. My brother added, however, that my good friend Sir Thomas had stepped into his place, and made good the deficiency. Being thus informed—or, as it seems now, misinformed, you will not wonder, my dear, that I no longer regarded the Colonel as my friend, or that I have not inquired after him from that day to the present. But when, speaking of him, you express yourself thus—*who, you know, has been so constantly your friend,*—I feel myself more than reconciled to him, I feel a sincere affection for him; convinced that he could not have acted towards me as my brother had heard, without your knowledge of it.

I have a word or two more to say on the same subject. While this troublesome matter was in agitation, and I expected little less than to be abandoned by the family, I received an anonymous letter, in a hand entirely strange to me, by the post. It was conceived in the kindest and most benevolent terms imaginable, exhorting me not to distress myself with fears lest the threatened event should take place, for

that whatever reduction of my income might happen, the defect should be supplied by a person who loved me tenderly and approved my conduct. I wish I knew who dictated this letter: I have seen, not long since, a style most excessively like it.

How kind are you, my cousin, to think for me as you do. Propose what you will, and I am prepared to adopt it, for you have given me no counsel yet, of which I have not instantly seen the propriety. My dedicatory powers, (which what they may be I know not,) are perfectly disengaged. Of all patrons upon earth I should choose a Lady-patron, and of all ladies to whom I can properly dedicate, Lady Spencer. Should I dedicate to a Lord, by giving the preference to one, I might offend two; for I hope not to have less than three in my train,—Dartmouth, Bagot, Thurlow. To the last-mentioned of this noble triumvirate I have written, but do not much expect an answer, for he writes, as I am told, to nobody. But then I have so contrived that his silence shall stand for consent. The answer of Lord Dartmouth to my application I have sent to Unwin, who, I hope, will have shown it to you by the time that this letter reaches you. I have great pleasure in the thought of your interview with him; and Mrs. Unwin is only sorry that she cannot put her eyes into her son's head while he is with you. He intends to be in London to-day. Possibly indeed he may not be able to call on you to-morrow, but I make little doubt that he will before he returns.

I have so managed that the General cannot possibly suspect me of having been directed to write to him. I

conclude that if he be not in town himself, there will yet be somebody in his house to receive the letter. Where is his country house? and, is Mrs. Cowper living?

This has been one of my terrible days, and I begin to feel myself exhausted. You never had a correspondent before who, when he was about to write to you, prepared himself for it by an emetic. This, however, as it has happened, is the second time that I have done so.

Yours, my beloved cousin, with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects,

WM. COWPER.

My Proposals will be ready for publication in a very few days. I design writing by this post to Johnson, on purpose to set the press to work.

Adieu! May every thousand years of your life be happier than the foregoing.

We are eating the second barrel of *Our Lady's* oysters, which are excellent.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Jan. 10, 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it

is possible to do a man material injury by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch, that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. ———, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly disposition towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say. You cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted therefore that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement perhaps when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life that did not undergo variations; and his longest pieces, many. I will only observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But, again, I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it before, and have no need that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would

have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grub Street.

My cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends, and of their friends, into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Jan. 14, 1786.

I AM glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh. I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shown her to you. She also was delighted with her visitor, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again; but is under some apprehensions that a tender regard for the drum of your ear may keep you from her. Never mind! You have two drums; and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible for any man to tell me,—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector? Is it possible that he could be determined to it by a conceit, so little worthy of him, as that, having made the number of his books completely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake proceed any farther? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy? Tell me also, if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found that he left off exactly where he should; and that every epic poem, to all generations, is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector? I do not in the least doubt it. Therefore, if I live to write a dozen epic poems, I will always take care to bury Hector,

and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had a truly kind letter from Mr. Smith, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honour James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society than mine is ever likely to be.

You say—"why should I trouble you with my troubles?" I answer—"Why not? What is a friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry the other?"

You see your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour; and you practise both with your best ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would that all the world were so blinded even as you are! But there are some in it, who, like the Chinese, say—"We have two eyes; and other nations have but one!" I am glad however that in your one eye you have sight enough to discover that such censures are not worth minding.

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H. a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 14, 1786.

You never suffered your sermons to interfere with our correspondence, much less ought I to permit my poetry to do so. Neither do I; for though I have many unanswered letters, at least several, and am at this time particularly intent upon the preparation of the Iliad for the press, these are not the reasons why I am at this time shorter than usual. I told you, I believe, that I have been obliged to put my stomach under the care of a physician. A part of the discipline that he has enjoined me is an emetic every ten days or fortnight. This happens to be the very day dedicated to that exercise, and the abominable drug not choosing to return the way it went, has kept me in a state of continual sickness, so that I am at present altogether unqualified to do what I have here undertaken.

My proposals are already printed. I ought rather to say, that they are ready for printing; having near ten days ago returned the correction of the proof. But a cousin of mine, and one who will, I dare say, be very active in my literary cause, (I mean General Cowper,) having earnestly recommended it to me to annex a specimen, I have accordingly sent him one, extracted from the latter part of the last book of the Iliad, and consisting of a hundred and seven lines. I chose to extract it from that part of the poem, because if the reader should happen to find himself content with it, he will naturally be encouraged by it to hope

well of the part preceding. Every man who can do any thing in the translating way is pretty sure to set off with spirit; but in works of such a length, there is always danger of flagging near the close.

My subscription, I hope, will be more powerfully promoted than subscriptions generally are. I have a warm and affectionate friend in Lady Hesketh; and one equally disposed, and even still more able to serve me, in the General above-mentioned. The Bagot family all undertake my cause with ardour; and I have several others, of whose ability and good-will I could not doubt without doing them injustice. It will, however, be necessary to bestow yet much time on the revisal of this work, for many reasons; and especially, because he who contends with Pope upon Homer's ground, can, of all writers, least afford to be negligent.

Mr. Scott brought me as much as he could remember of a kind message from Lord Dartmouth; but it was rather imperfectly delivered. Enough of it, however, came to hand to convince me that his Lordship takes a friendly interest in my success. When his Lordship and I sat side by side, in the sixth form at Westminster, we little thought that in process of time, one of us was ordained to give a new translation of Homer. Yet, at that very time, it seems, I was laying the foundation of this superstructure.

We were greatly pleased with your account of Mr. W. May your new disciple's conduct ever do honour to his principles, and to the instructions of the spiritual counsellor whom he hath chosen. Mr. Unwin

in his last letter takes notice of the change in him that you have spoken of. Your letter is at this moment in the flames, according to your desire.

Many thanks for oysters, and much love upon all accounts, to you and yours.

Adieu, my friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Jan. 15, 1786.

I HAVE just time to give you an hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has unexpectedly encountered, and at which I suppose that you have been somewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London and a warm friend in General Cowper; he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new Translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice; and accordingly the day before yesterday I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation they

would find the former parts of the work not less so. For if a writer flags any where, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate. . . . . You may say perhaps, (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say,) "It is well;—but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?" I answer, or rather *should* answer—"By no means,—not as a poet; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority, I reprobate my own undertaking."

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops, that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are; but your brother, learned as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend,
Very affectionately,
W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Jan. 16, 1786.

I HAVE sent, as I hope you have heard by this time, a specimen to my good friend the General. To tell you the truth, I begin to be ashamed of myself that I had opposed him in the only two measures he recommended, and then assured him that I should be glad of his advice at all times. Having put myself under a course of strict self-examination upon this subject, I found at last that all the reluctance I had felt against a compliance with his wishes, proceeded from a principle of shame-facedness at bottom, that had insensibly influenced my reasonings, and determined me against the counsel of a man whom I knew to be wiser than myself. Wonderful as it may seem, my cousin, yet it is equally true, that although I certainly did translate the Iliad with a design to publish it when I had done, and although I have twice issued from the press already, yet I do tremble at the thought, and so tremble at it that I could not bear to send out a specimen, because, by doing so, I should appear in public a good deal sooner than I had purposed. Thus have I developed my whole heart to you, and if you should think it at all expedient, have not the least objection to your communicating to the General this interpretation of the matter. The specimen has suffered a little through my too great zeal of amendment; in one instance, at least, it will be necessary to restore the original reading. And by the way I will observe that a scrupulous nicety is a dangerous thing. It often betrays a writer into a worse mistake than it

corrects, sometimes makes a blemish where before there was none, and is almost always fatal to the spirit of the performance.

You do not ask me, my dear, for an explanation of what I could mean by *anguish of mind*, and by *the perpetual interruptions* that I mentioned. Because you *do not* ask, and because your reason for not asking consists of a delicacy and tenderness peculiar to yourself, for that very cause I will tell you. A wish so suppressed is more irresistible than many wishes plainly uttered. Know then that in the year 73 the same scene that was acted at St. Alban's, opened upon me again at Olney, only covered with a still deeper shade of melancholy, and ordained to be of much longer duration. I was suddenly reduced from my wonted rate of understanding to an almost childish imbecility. I did not indeed lose my senses, but I lost the power to exercise them. I could return a rational answer even to a difficult question, but a question was necessary, or I never spoke at all. This state of mind was accompanied, as I suppose it to be in most instances of the kind, with misapprehension of things and persons that made me a very untractable patient. I believed that every body hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all; was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp. I would not be more circumstantial than is necessary. Dr. Cotton was consulted. He replied that he could do no more for me than might be done at Olney, but recommended particular vigilance, lest I should attempt my life:—a caution for which there was the greatest occasion. At

the same time that I was convinced of Mrs. Unwin's aversion to me, I could endure no other companion. The whole management of me consequently devolved upon her, and a terrible task she had; she performed it, however, with a cheerfulness hardly ever equalled on such an occasion; and I have often heard her say, that if ever she praised God in her life it was when she found that she was to have all the labour. She performed it accordingly, but, as I hinted once before, very much to the hurt of her own constitution. It will be thirteen years in little more than a week, since this malady seized me. Methinks I hear you ask,—your affection for me will, I know, make you wish to do so,—Is it removed? I reply, in great measure, but not quite. Occasionally I am much distressed, but that distress becomes continually less frequent, and I think less violent. I find writing, and especially poetry, my best remedy. Perhaps had I understood music, I had never written verse, but had lived upon fiddle-strings instead. It is better however as it is. A poet may, if he pleases, be of a little use in the world, while a musician, the most skilful, can only divert himself and a few others. I have been emerging gradually from this pit. As soon as I became capable of action, I commenced carpenter, made cupboards, boxes, stools. I grew weary of this in about a twelvemonth, and addressed myself to the making of birdcages. To this employment succeeded that of gardening, which I intermingled with that of drawing, but finding that the latter occupation injured my eyes, I renounced it, and commenced poet. I have given you, my dear, a little history in shorthand; I know that it will touch

your feelings, but do not let it interest them too much. *In the year when I wrote the Task*, (for it occupied me about a year,) *I was very often most supremely unhappy*, and am under God indebted in good part to that work for not having been much worse. You did not know what a clever fellow I am, and how I can turn my hand to any thing.

I perceive that this time I shall make you pay double postage, and there is no help for it. Unless I write myself out now, I shall forget half of what I have to say. Now therefore for the interruptions at which I hinted.—There came a lady into this country, by name and title Lady Austen, the widow of the late Sir Robert Austen. At first she lived with her sister, about a mile from Olney; but in a few weeks took lodgings at the vicarage here. Between the vicarage and the back of our house are interposed, our garden, an orchard, and the garden belonging to the vicarage. She had lived much in France, was very sensible, and had infinite vivacity. She took a great liking to us, and we to her. She had been used to a great deal of company, and we, fearing that she would find such a transition into silent retirement irksome, contrived to give her our agreeable company often. Becoming continually more and more intimate, a practice obtained at length of our dining with each other alternately every day, Sundays excepted. In order to facilitate our communication, we made doors in the two garden-walls above-said, by which means we considerably shortened the way from one house to the other, and could meet when we pleased without entering the town at all, a measure

the rather expedient, because in winter the town is abominably dirty, and she kept no carriage. On her first settlement in our neighbourhood, I made it my particular business, (for at that time I was not employed in writing, having published my first volume, and not begun my second,) to pay my devoirs to her ladyship every morning at eleven. Customs very soon become laws. I began the "Task,"—for she was the lady who gave me the Sofa for a subject. Being once engaged in the work, I began to feel the inconvenience of my morning attendance. We had seldom breakfasted ourselves till ten, and the intervening hour was all the time that I could find in the whole day for writing; and occasionally it would happen that the half of that hour was all that I could secure for the purpose. But there was no remedy: long usage had made that which at first was optional, a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity, and I was forced to neglect the Task to attend upon the Muse who had inspired the subject. But she had ill health, and before I quite finished the work was obliged to repair to Bristol. Thus, as I told you, my dear, the cause of the many interruptions that I mentioned, was removed, and now, except the Bull that I spoke of, we have seldom any company at all. After all that I have said upon this matter, you will not completely understand me perhaps, unless I account for the remainder of the day. I will add therefore, that having paid my morning visit, I walked; returning from my walk, I dressed; we then met and dined, and parted not till between ten and eleven at night.

My cousin, I thank you for giving me a copy of the

General's note, of which I and my publication were so much the subject. I learned from it better than I could have learned the same thing from any other document, the kindness of his purposes towards me, and how much I may depend on his assistance. I am vexed, and have been these three days, that I thwarted him in the affair of a specimen; but as I told you, I have still my gloomy hours, which had their share, together with the more powerful cause assigned above, in determining my behaviour. But I have given the best proof possible of my repentance, and was indeed in such haste to evince it, that I sent my despatches to Newport, on purpose to catch the by-post. How much I love you for the generosity of that offer which made the General observe that your money seemed to burn in your pocket, I cannot readily, nor indeed at all, express. Neither is Mrs. Unwin in the least behind me in her sense of it. We may well admire and love you, for we have not met with many such occurrences, or even heard of many such, since we first entered a world where friendship is in every mouth, but finds only here and there a heart that has room for it.

I know well, my cousin, how formidable a creature you are when you become once outrageous. No sprat in a storm is half so terrible. But it is all in vain. You are at a distance, so we snap our fingers at you. Not that we have any more fowls at present. No, no; you may make yourself easy upon that subject. The coop is empty, and at this time of year cannot be replenished. But the spring will soon begin to advance. There are such things as eggs in the world, which eggs will, by incubation, be transformed, some

of them into chickens, and others of them into ducklings. So muster up all your patience, for as sure as you live, if we live also, we shall put it to the trial. But seriously, you must not deny us one of the greatest pleasures we can have, which is, to give you now and then a little tiny proof how much we value you. We cannot sit with our hands before us, and be contented with only saying that we love Lady Hesketh.

The little item that you inserted in your cover, concerning a review of a certain author's work, in the Gentleman's Magazine, excited Mrs. Unwin's curiosity to see it in a moment. In vain did I expostulate with her on the vanity of all things here below, especially of human praise, telling her what perhaps indeed she had heard before, but what on such an occasion I thought it not amiss to remind her of, that at the best it is but as the idle wind that whistles as it passes by, and that a little attention to the dictates of reason would presently give her the victory over all the curiosity that she felt so troublesome. For a short time, indeed, I prevailed, but the next day the fit returned upon her with more violence than before. She would see it,—she was resolved that she would see it that moment. You must know, my dear, that a watchmaker lives within two or three doors of us, who takes in the said Magazine for a gentleman at some distance, and as it happened it had not been sent to its proper owner. Accordingly the messenger that the lady dispatched, returned with it, and she was gratified. As to myself, I read the article indeed, and read it to her; but I do not concern myself much you may suppose about such matters, and shall only make

two or three cursory remarks, and so conclude. In the first place therefore, I observe that it is enough to craze a poor poet to see his verses so miserably misprinted, and which is worse if possible, his very praises in a manner annihilated, by a jumble of the lines out of their places, so that in two instances, the end of the period takes the lead of the beginning of it. The said poet has still the more reason to be crazed, because the said Magazine is in general singularly correct. But at Christmas, no doubt your printer will get drunk as well as another man. It is astonishing to me that they know so exactly how much I translated of Voltaire. My recollection refreshed by them tells me that they are right in the number of the books that they affirm to have been translated by me, but till they brought the fact again to my mind, I myself had forgotten that part of the business entirely. My brother had twenty guineas for eight books of English Henriade, and I furnished him with four of them. They are not equally accurate in the affair of the Tame Mouse. That I kept one is certain, and that I kept it as they say, in my bureau,—but not in the Temple. It was while I was at Westminster. I kept it till it produced six young ones, and my transports when I first discovered them cannot easily be conceived,—any more than my mortification, when going again to visit my little family, I found that mouse herself had eaten them! I turned her loose, in indignation, and vowed never to keep a mouse again. Who the writer of this article can be, I am not able to imagine, nor where he had his information of these particulars. But they know all the world and every thing that belongs to it.

The mistake that has occasioned the mention of Unwin's name in the margin would be ludicrous if it were not, inadvertently indeed, and innocently on their part, profane. I should have thought it impossible that when I spoke of One who had been wounded in the hands and in the side, any reader in a Christian land could have been for a moment at a loss for the person intended.

Adieu, my dear cousin; I intended that one of these should have served as a case for the other, but before I was aware of it, I filled both sheets completely. However, as your money burns in your pocket, there is no harm done. I shall not add a syllable more except that I am and, while I breathe, ever shall be

Most truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

Yes; one syllable more. Having just finished the Iliad, I was determined to have a deal of talk with you.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR, Olney, Monday, Jan. 23, 1786.

ANONYMOUS is come again;—may God bless him, whosoever he be, as I doubt not that he will. A certain person said on a certain occasion, (and he never spoke a word that failed,) Whoso giveth you a cup of cold water in my name, shall by no means lose his reward. Therefore anonymous as he chooses to be upon earth, his name, I trust, will hereafter be found written in heaven. But when great princes, or characters much

superior to great princes, choose to be incog, it is a sin against decency and good manners to seem to know them. I therefore know nothing of anonymous, but that I love him heartily and with most abundant cause. Had I opportunity I would send you his letter, though yourself excepted, I would indulge none with a sight of it. To confide it to *your* hands will be no violation of the secrecy that he has enjoined himself, and consequently me. But I can give you a short summary of its purport.—After an introduction of a religious cast, which does great honour to himself, and in which he makes a humble comparison between himself and me, by far too much to my advantage, he proceeds to tell me that being lately in company where my last work was mentioned, mention was also made of my intended publication. He informs me of the different sentiments of the company on that subject, and expresses his own in terms the most encouraging; but adds, that having left the company, and shut himself up in his chamber, an apprehension there seized him, lest, if perhaps the world should not enter into my views of the matter, and the work should come short of the success that I hope for, the mortification might prove too much for my health; yet thinks that even in that case I may comfort myself by adverting to similar instances of failure where the writer's genius would have insured success, if any thing could have insured it, and alludes in particular to the fate and fortune of the Paradise Lost. In the last place he gives his attention to my circumstances, takes the kindest notice of their narrowness, and makes me a present of an annuity of fifty pounds a year, wishing that

it were five hundred pounds. In a P. S. he tells me, a small parcel will set off by the Wellingborough coach on Tuesday next, which he hopes will arrive safe. I have given you the bones, but the benignity and affection which is the marrow of those bones, in so short an abridgement, I could not give you. Wonder with me, my beloved cousin, at the goodness of God, who, according to Dr. Watts's beautiful stanza,

> —— can clear the darkest skies,
> Can give us day for night,
> Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
> To rivers of delight.

As I said once before, so say I again, my heart is as light as a bird on the subject of Homer. Neither without prayer, nor without confidence in the providential goodness of God, has that work been undertaken or continued. I am not so dim-sighted, sad as my spirit is at times, but that I can plainly discern his Providence going before me in the way. Unforeseen, unhoped-for advantages have sprung at his bidding, and a prospect, at first cloudy indeed and discouraging enough, has been continually brightening ever since I announced my intentions. But suppose the worst;—suppose that I should not succeed in any measure proportioned to my hopes;—how then? Why then, my dear, I will hold this language with myself: To write was necessary to me. I undertook an honourable task, and with upright intentions. It served me for more than two years as an amusement, and as such was of infinite service to my spirits. But God did not see it good for me that I should be very famous.

If he did not, it is better for me that I am not. Fame is neither my meat nor my drink; I lived fifty years without it, and should I live fifty more and get to heaven at last, then I shall not want it.—So, my dear, you see that I am armed at all points. I do not mean that I should feel nothing, but that thus thinking I should feel supportably.

I knew that my last letter would give you pain, but there is no need that it should give you so much. He who hath preserved me hitherto, will still preserve me. All the dangers that I have escaped are so many pillars of remembrance to which I shall hereafter look back with comfort, and be able, as I well hope, to inscribe on every one of them a grateful memorial of God's singular protection of me. Mine has been a life of wonders for many years, and a life of wonders I in my heart believe it will be to the end. Wonders I have seen in the great deeps, and wonders I shall see in the paths of mercy also. This, my dear, is my creed.

My eyes, you know were never strong, and it was in the character of a carpenter that I almost put them out. The strains and the exertions of hard labour distended and relaxed the blood vessels to such a degree that an inflammation ensued so painful that for a year I was in continual torment, and had so far lost the sight of one of them that I could distinguish with it nothing but the light, and very faintly *that*. But a medicine of Elliot's, which I had never tried before, though two of his medicines I had used for many years, through God's mercy cured me almost in an instant, and my eyes are for the most part

stronger and clearer now than they were when you used to see me daily. I shall write to Sephus soon for a supply of this medicine, for though I do not often want it, I would never be without it. He has always procured it for me.

I am heartily glad that your thoughts and ours coincided so exactly on the subject of the Madans. I should be very sorry to see Signors and Signoras in the list of my subscribers; yet such a sight, as those warblers have so much the command of his purse, it is not at all impossible that I might encounter. He will necessarily hear of the work, and if he subscribes himself, it shall be quite sufficient. I rejoice at my success with Dr. Maty. He was probably that friend of Dr. Johnson's, who revised my first volume, and made a favourable report of it. But that the knowledge of this last has diffused itself so much further, has been owing, my dear, principally to yourself. If Dr. Maty applied to you for permission to mention my Homer in his next Review, it is plainly enough to be seen that from you he received, or by your means, my last publication. *Vous avez beaucoup de courage, ma cousine*, in my cause. Neither the asperity of a critic professed, nor the frowns of a whole university whom I have censured, have any terrors for you, where you apprehend my interest is concerned. If Dr. Jackson should not call me also a d——d fool, as well as Pope, I should not wonder if he were to give me as hard a name, or if my book were to be burnt at Carfax. But never mind, the book will do them no harm, if they do not quarrel with good counsel; and if they should, their resentment will do me none.

I must not conclude without a word in answer to your affectionate enquiries concerning the success of Dr. Kerr's regimen. It has done all that in the course of so short a time I could expect from it. I have bid adieu to indigestions and heartburn. A spasmodic affection of the stomach in the night I am still troubled with, but in a less degree. In short, I have little doubt that perseverance in the course he has prescribed shall, by the blessing of God, restore me entirely. I have added to my dumb-bells a rope, through which I jump, if I do not flatter myself, with as much agility as when a boy. This is much the best domestic exercise of the two.

I have a large interest in Staffordshire by means of the Bagot family; and yesterday brought me another letter from Walter Bagot, entreating me to hasten my specimen through the press, for that the nobs and the gents were all upon the point of flying to London. Lord Dartmouth is equally anxious on the same subject. Richard Howard, formerly Richard Bagot, has subscribed another twenty pounds, and his brother Walter desires me to present him with my two volumes handsomely bound, to secure him the more in my interest.

My ever beloved cousin, adieu.—Perfectly yours.

W. C.

Oysters attend us duly. Thanks.

Thank you, my dear, for galloping John. He rides well.

P. S.—I kept my letter unsealed to the last moment, that I might give you an account of the safe

arrival of the expected parcel. It is at all points worthy of the letter-writer. Snuff-box, purse, notes, Bess, Puss, Tiney, all safe. Again, may God bless him!

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND, Jan. 23, 1786.

* * * * * * *

* * * * * *

The paragraph that I am now beginning will contain information of a kind that I am not very fond of communicating, and on a subject that I am not very fond of writing about. Only to you I will open my budget without reserve, because I know that in what concerns my authorship you take an interest that demands my confidence, and will be pleased with every occurrence that is at all propitious to my endeavours. Lady Hesketh, who, had she as many mouths as Virgil's Fame, with a tongue in each, would employ them all in my service, writes me word that Dr. Maty of the Museum has read my Task. I cannot even to you relate what he says of it; though, when I began this story, I thought I had courage enough to tell it boldly. He designs however to give his opinion of it in his next monthly Review; and being informed that I was about to finish a translation of Homer, asked her Ladyship's leave to mention the circumstance on that occasion. This incident pleases me the more, because I have authentic intelligence of his being a critical character in all its forms, acute, sour, and blunt; and so incorruptible withal, and so unsuscepti-

ble of bias from undue motives, that, as my correspondent informs me, he would not praise his own mother, did he not think she deserved it.

The said Task is likewise gone to Oxford, conveyed thither by an intimate friend of Dr. Jackson's, with a purpose of putting it into his hands. My friend, what will they do with me at Oxford? Will they burn me at Carfax, or will they anathematize me with bell, book, and candle? I can say with more truth than Ovid did,—*Parve nec invideo.*

The said Dr. Jackson has been heard to say, and I give you his own words, (stop both your ears while I utter them,) "that Homer has never been translated, and that Pope was a fool." Very irreverent language to be sure; but in consideration of the subject on which he used them, we will pardon it, even in a dean. One of the masters of Eton told a friend of mine lately, that a translation of Homer is much wanted. So now you have all my news. * *

Yours, my dear friend, cordially,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

It is very pleasant, my dearest cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous; but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself, therefore, driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz. that I will constitute you my Thank-receiver-general for whatsoever gift I shall receive

hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with crystal, having the figures of three hares in the foreground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest;* and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess.* For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country fellows to tie by the leg to their respective bedposts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment; for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless

in time of sickness; at which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once, however, I will venture. On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the MS. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General; and, enclosed in the same cover, notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such; and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General, that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson, that I would gladly submit my MS. to his friend. He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of animadversion, where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay, that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad. It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five; for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have

almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing; and upon my own experience, I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you, and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgement I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved cousin.

Farewell.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

I HAVE been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him; I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that, I doubt not, we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging

to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignionette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present: but he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made: but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be

any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest cousin,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

It must be, I suppose, a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep; in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time,—which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next, I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it; do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are

sure to be futile, many of them ill founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author, whose ill fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance, had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm, that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt beforehand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him.

We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through, before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has, no doubt, forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C———e, and her sister, in King Street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said—"Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will."—"These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled, and said—"Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof; and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Feb. 18, 1786.

I FEEL myself truly obliged to you for the leave that you give me, to be less frequent in writing, and more brief than heretofore. I have a long work upon my hands; and standing engaged to the public, (for by this time I suppose my subscription papers to be gone abroad,) not only for the performance of it, but for the performance of it in a reasonable time, it seems necessary to me not to intermit it often. My correspondence has also lately been renewed with several of my relations, and unavoidably engrosses now and then one of the few opportunities that I can find for writing. I nevertheless intend, in the exchange of letters with you, to be as regular as I can be, and to use, like a friend, the friendly allowance that you have made me.

My reason for giving notice of an Odyssey as well as an Iliad, was this:—I feared that the public, being left to doubt whether I should ever translate the former, would be unwilling to treat with me for the latter; which they will be apt to consider as an odd volume, and unworthy to stand upon their shelves alone. It is hardly probable, however, that I should begin the Odyssey for some months to come, being now closely engaged in the revisal of my translation of the Iliad, which I compare, as I go, most minutely with the original. One of the great defects of Pope's translation is, that it is licentious. To publish, therefore, a translation now that should be at all chargeable with the same fault,—that were not indeed as close and as faithful as possible, would be only *actum agere*, and

had therefore better be left undone. Whatever be said of mine, when it shall appear, it shall never be said that it is not faithful.

I thank you heartily, both for your wishes and prayers, that should a disappointment occur, I may not be too much hurt by it. Strange as it may seem to say it, and unwilling as I should be to say it to any person less candid than yourself, I will nevertheless say, that I have not entered on this work, unconnected as it must needs appear with the interests of the cause of God, without the direction of his Providence, nor altogether unassisted by him in the performance of it. Time will show to what it ultimately tends. I am inclined to believe that it has a tendency to which I myself am, at present, perfectly a stranger. Be that as it may, He knows my frame, and will consider that I am but dust; dust, into the bargain, that has been so trampled under foot and beaten, that a storm less violent than an unsuccessful issue of such a business might occasion, would be sufficient to blow me quite away. But I will tell you honestly, I have no fears upon the subject. My predecessor has given me every advantage.

As I know not to what end this my present occupation may finally lead, so neither did I know, when I wrote it, or at all suspect, one valuable end, at least, that was to be answered by the Task. It has pleased God to prosper it; and being composed in blank verse, it is likely to prove as seasonable an introduction to a blank verse Homer, by the same hand, as any that could have been devised: yet when I wrote the last line of the Task, I as little suspected that I should

ever engage in a version of the old Asiatic tale, as you do now. Let me now boast of some favours that the Task has procured me from benefactors at present unknown, and likely to continue so. In the first place I am indebted to it, at least I have every reason to think so, for a most elegant writing-desk: it is of cedar, and mounted with silver. Lady Hesketh sent it, but assured me that she is not the giver, neither will he be known. In the next place it has been the occasion unequivocally, of my receiving from another anonymous donor a handsome snuff-box, embellished on the lid with a landscape overlaid with a crystal. The background of the drawing, which is extremely neat, consists of a hill with a cottage on its top surrounded by trees, and in the foreground are seen the figures of three hares. Above, it is inscribed with these words—*The peasant's nest;* and below with these—*Puss, Tiney, and Bess.* My benefactor learned those names from an history of these three captives that I published two years since in the Gentleman's Magazine, and has characterised them exactly according to that account of them.

I should choose for your general motto,

Carmina tum melius, cùm venerit ipse, canemus.

For vol. i.

Unum pro multis dabitur caput.

For vol. ii.

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.

It seems to me that you cannot have better than these.

Our best love to Mrs. Newton, with thanks for Russia tongues.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. We wish S. Johnson very happy, and think that if a good Christian husband and a rural retreat can make her so, she has every thing on her side.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

SINCE so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy! An enemy, however, you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least, as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance. I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you; and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite

to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June; and June, my cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter,—sooner or later they will all come out; and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance, that, more than any thing, reconciles us to that measure,) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead; and for my own part I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought that in reality it is no defect; on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever

lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again, before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me, otherwise to Johnson immediately; for he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together, for they have worried me without remorse or conscience: at least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone; but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my cousin whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry.

When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, dear cousin,

W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Feb. 27, 1786.

ALAS! alas! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it. By the close of your letter it should seem, that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know by experience that they are neither few nor small; and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before, yet do I sincerely rejoice in this, that whereas there is but one true comforter in the universe, under afflictions such as yours, you both know him, and know where to seek him. I thought you a man the most happily mated, that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish that, short as my acquaintance with her was, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs. Unwin sympathises with you also most sincerely, and you neither are, nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers

as we can make at Olney. I will not detain you longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to commit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you a sorrowful adieu!

Adieu! ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Mond. Feb. 27, 1786.

As I sat by the fire-side this day after dinner, I saw your chamber windows coated over with snow, so that the glass was hardly visible. This circumstance naturally suggested the thought that it will be otherwise when you come. Then the roses will begin to blow, and perhaps the heat will be as troublesome as the cold is now. The next thought of course was this,—three long months must pass before we shall see her! I will, however, be as patient as I can, and comfort myself with the thought that we shall meet at last. You said in one of your letters that you had resolved to dream of nobody but of Homer and his translator. I hope you keep your resolution, for I can assure you that the last-mentioned dreams most comfortably of you. About three nights since I dreamed that, sitting in our summer-house, I saw you coming towards me. *With inexpressible pleasure I sprang to meet you, caught you in my arms, and said,—Oh my precious, precious cousin, may God make me thankful that I see thy face again!* Now, this was a dream, and no dream;—it was only a shadow while it lasted; but if we both live, and live to meet, it will be realized here-

after. Yet alas! the passages and events of the day as well as of the night are little better than dreams. Poor Bagot! whom I love sincerely because he has a singular affection for me. Ten days since he wrote me a letter, by which it appeared he was cheerful and happy. Yesterday brought me another, consisting of only about six lines, in which he tells me that his wife is dead. I transcribe it, for it is impossible to do it justice any other way.

"Oh, my dear friend—Things are much altered with me since I wrote last. My harp is turned into mourning, and my music into the voice of weeping. Her whom you saw and loved,—her whom nobody ever yet saw and knew that did not love;—her have I lost. Pray to God for me, that for Christ's sake he would continue to comfort and support both me and mine under our great affliction.

Yours ever,

"Blithfield, Feb. 23, 1786. WALT. BAGOT."

Poor man! I can attest the truth of what he says from my own knowledge of her, however short. There are people whose characters we penetrate and fully comprehend in a moment: she was one of those. Her character was so strongly marked in the gentleness of her aspect, her voice, her carriage, that the instant she was seen she was beloved. My knowledge of her was two hours long, and no more; yet when I took leave of her, I could not help saying, God bless you, madam! Indeed, my cousin, I never felt so much for any man. His own sensibilities are naturally of the

quickest, and he was attached to her in the extreme, as it was impossible but that he must be. Mr. Madan's book happened to be mentioned when he was here, when all he said of it was—"I know not how Mr. Madan finds it, but the longer I know my wife, the more I love her." At that time I had never seen her, but when I did I wondered not.

I hardly know how to leave this subject for another, but it is necessary that I should. So farewell, poor Bagot, for the present; may God comfort thee and thy seven children!—Now for Homer, and the matters to Homer appertaining. Sephus and I are of opinions perfectly different on the subject of such an advertisement as he recommends. The only proper part for me is not to know that such a man as Pope has ever existed. I am so nice upon this subject that in that note in the specimen, in which I have accounted for the anger of Achilles, (which, I believe, I may pay myself the compliment to say was never accounted for before,) I have not even so much as hinted at the perplexity in which Pope was entangled when he endeavoured to explain it, nor at the preposterous and blundering work that he has made with it. No, my dear, as I told you once before, my attempt has itself a loud voice, and speaks a most intelligible language. Had Pope's translation been good, or had I thought it such, or had I not known that it is admitted by all whom a knowledge of the original qualifies to judge of it, to be a very defective one, I had never translated myself one line of Homer. Dr. Johnson is the only modern writer who has spoken of it in terms of approbation, at least the only one that I have met with.

And his praise of it is such as convinces me, intimately acquainted as I am with Pope's performance, that he talked at random, that either he had never examined it by Homer's, or never since he was a boy. For I would undertake to produce numberless passages from it, if need were, not only ill translated, but meanly written. It is not therefore for me, convinced as I am of the truth of all I say, to go forth into the world holding up Pope's translation with one hand as a work to be extolled, and my own with the other as a work still wanted. It is plain to me that I behave with sufficient liberality on the occasion if, neither praising nor blaming my predecessor, I go right forward, and leave the world to decide between us.

Now, to come nearer to myself. Poets, my dear, (it is a secret I have lately discovered,) are born to trouble, and of all poets, translators of Homer to the most. Our dear friend, the General, whom I truly love, in his last letter mortified me not a little. I do not mean by suggesting lines that he thought might be amended, for I hardly ever wrote fifty lines together that I could not afterwards have improved, but by what appeared to me an implied censure on the whole, or nearly the whole quire that I sent to you. It was a great work, he said; it should be kept long in hand;—years, if it were possible; that it stood in need of much amendment, that it ought to be made worthy of me, that he could not think of showing it to Maty, that he could not even think of laying it before Johnson and his friend in its present condition. Now, my dear, understand thou this: if there lives a man who stands clear of the charge of careless writing, I am that man. I might prudently,

perhaps, but I could not honestly, admit that charge: It would account in a way favourable to my own ability for many defects of which I am guilty, but it would be disingenuous and untrue. The copy which I sent to you was almost a new, I mean a second, translation, as far as it went. With the first I had taken pains, but with the second I took more. I weighed many expressions, exacted from myself the utmost fidelity to my author, and tried all the numbers upon my own ear again and again. If, therefore, after all this care, the execution be such as in the General's account it seems to be, I appear to have made shipwreck of my hopes at once. He said, indeed, that the similes delighted him, and the catalogue of the ships surpassed his expectations: but his commendation of so small a portion of the whole affected me rather painfully, as it seemed to amount to an implied condemnation of the rest. I have been the more uneasy because I know his taste to be good, and by the selection that he made of lines that he thought should be altered, he proved it such. I altered them all, and thanked him, as I could very sincerely, for his friendly attention. Now what is the present state of my mind on this subject? It is this. I do not myself think ill of what I have done, nor at the same time so foolishly well as to suppose that it has no blemishes. But I am sadly afraid that the General's anxiety will make him extremely difficult to be pleased: I fear that he will require of me more than any other man would require, or than he himself would require of any other writer. What I can do to give him satisfaction, I am perfectly ready to do; but it is possible for an anxious friend to

demand more than my ability could perform. Not a syllable of all this, my dear, to him, or to any creature. —Mum!

Your question, your natural, well warranted, and most reasonable question concerning me and Mrs. Unwin, shall be answered at large when we meet. But to Mrs. Unwin I refer you for that answer; she is most desirous to give you a most explicit one. I have a history, my dear, belonging to me, which I am not the proper person to relate. You have heard somewhat of it,—as much as it was possible for me to write; but that *somewhat* bears a most inconsiderable proportion to the whole.

All intercourse has ceased between us and Lady Austen almost these two years. This mystery shall also be accounted for when you come. She has left Bristol, and is at present settled within a mile of us with her sister. You are candid, and will give me credit when I say that the fault is not with us.

I have disposed of thirty-three papers of Proposals, —even I. Mr. Throckmorton has most obligingly given me his name, and has undertaken the disposal of twelve. Lord Archibald Hamilton has also subscribed, at the instance of a neighbour of mine, and does me the honour to say that he subscribes with pleasure. Adieu, my beloved cousin; thank you for all your welcome intelligence. I had need of it.

Yours most truly,

WM. COWPER.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, March 6, 1786.

YOUR opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world; and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The* is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, and perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, the perpetual use of it in our language is to us miserable poets attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that a fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily, too, (unless elision prevents it,) by this abominable intruder; and, which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, The French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them.

Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so,) the practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by Milton, who of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton, indeed, has dared to say that he had a bad one; for which he deserves, as far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but there is still a fifthly behind, and it is this,—that the custom of abbreviating *The* belongs to the style in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that style would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that style I might say I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c., which, however, I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

"Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all his parts,"

my licence is not equally exceptionable, because *W*, though he rank as a consonant in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear; and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say I still,—I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day; neither would I have pelted you, my dearest cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections which

you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I waive them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth, whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage,—

> "Softly he placed his hand
> On th' old man's hand, and push'd it gently away."

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend, the General, sent me his opinion of the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, "With this part I was particularly pleased; there is nothing in poetry more descriptive." Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various; there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the books of my Homer as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often

found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it, when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's letter. Several compliments were paid me, on the subject of that first volume, by my own friends; but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise. I only heard by a side wind, that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C.

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens, that I hope shall be verified by the event.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, March 13, 1786.

I SEEM to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a letter, but a scrap that I shall send you. I could tell you things that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you; but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation,

and bestowing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated and earnest solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic that I have ever heard of. He is a Swiss, a painter in the historical way; has an accurate knowledge of English, and for his knowledge of Homer has, I verily believe, no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast as I finish them off, and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you, that he is very much pleased with what he has seen. Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Monday, March 20, 1786.

THOSE mornings that I set apart for writing to you, my dearest cousin, are my holiday mornings. At those times I give myself a dispensation from all poetical employments, and as soon as I cease to converse with you, betake myself to a walk in the garden. You will observe therefore that my health cannot possibly suf-

fer by such a procedure, but is rather likely to be benefited; for finding it easy as well as pleasant to write when I write to you, I consequently spend less time at my desk than when Homer lies before me, and have more opportunity of taking exercise and air. Though you *seem* to be so, you are not *in fact* beforehand with me in what you say of my letters, for it has long been an agreed point between me and Mrs. Unwin that yours are the best in the world. You will say—"that is impossible, for I always write what comes uppermost, and never trouble myself either about method or expression." And for that very reason, my dear, they are what they are, so good that they could not be better. As to expression, you have no need to study it; yours is sure to be such as it ought; and as to method, you know as well as I, that it is never more out of its place than in a letter. I have only to add on this subject, that not a word of all this is designed as a compliment to you, but merely as a justification of our opinion.

I begin heartily to wish that Signor Fuseli had accomplished his critique of what now lies before him. You have twice been disagreeably constrained to apologize to Mr. Burrows for the delay, and I am very unwilling that you should be a third time reduced to that necessity. I shall be obliged when it comes to my hands again to bestow on it perhaps two or three sittings, in order to accommodate the copy to his remarks, and to give it such further improvements of my own as it shall appear to me to be still susceptible of: which done, I shall remit it instantly to you. Should you have occasion any time to send your

Samuel city-ward, I shall be glad if you will charge him with my poetry-box for Johnson, that he may pack the papers in it. This however is not necessary, for they will probably come equally safe under any such cover as he will give them. I bestowed two mornings in the last week, on the extirpation of elisions only. And from all that part of the second book, which you have not seen, and from the third and fourth completely, have so effectually weeded them out, that in all those quarters you cannot find above three; and those not only pardonable on account of necessity, but such as you would yourself approve, I believe, rather than the vacuity that would be occasioned by their removal. I displaced, I suppose, not less than thirty, some of them horrible creatures, and such as even I myself was glad to be rid of. The same care I shall take throughout the whole translation. I am also a very good boy in another respect: I use all possible diligence to give a graceful gait and movement to such lines as rather hobbled a little before, with this reserve however, that when the sense requires it, or when for the sake of avoiding a monotonous cadence of the lines, of which there is always danger in so long a work, it shall appear to be prudent, I still leave a verse behind me that has some uneasiness in its formation. It is not possible to read Paradise Lost, with an ear for harmony, without being sensible of the great advantage which Milton drew from such a management. One line only occurs to me at present as an instance of what I mean, and I cannot stop to recollect more; but rumbling and rough as it is, it is in my mind, considering the subjects, one

of the finest that ever was composed. He is describing hell; and as if the contemplation of such a scene had scared him out of all his poetical wits, he finishes the terrible picture thus,—

> *Abominable, unutterable, and worse*
> Than fancy yet had formed, or fear conceived,
> Gorgons and hydras and chimæras dire.

Agree with me, my dear, that the deformity of the first of these three lines is the greatest beauty imaginable. This, however, is only an instance of uncouthness where the *sense* recommends it. Had I the book before me, I could soon fill my sheet with quotations of irregular lines taken from the most beautiful parts of his poem, which he used partly as foils to the rest, and partly to relieve the ear, as I said, from the tedium of an unvaried and perpetual smoothness. This I understand to be one of the great secrets of verse-writing in a piece of great length. Uncritical readers find that they perform a long journey through several hundred pages perhaps without weariness; they find the numbers harmonious, but are not aware of the art by which that harmony is brought to pass, much less suspect that a violation of all harmony on some occasions, is the very thing to which they are not a little indebted for their gratification. Half strained critics are disgusted; they discover that this line and that line limps, but cannot enter into the poet's reasons for making it do so; and critics indeed, who have a well-formed ear and a true classical taste are pleased, and know how to account for it. I know, my beloved cousin, that you will not allow yourself to be

of the last mentioned order. You disdain all intelligence in these matters, and I have no doubt of the sincerity with which you do it. But you must pardon me if I estimate your judgement in poetry at a much higher rate than yourself. Of this, at least I am sure, that of all the remarks you have made upon mine not one has bespoke any deficiency of taste or judgement in the maker. On the contrary, I have seen good reason to acquiesce in them all, the *cask* excepted, which is a word that the Greek makes necessary, and the "*gently away*," which I do not pretend to be no blemish, but an excusable one.

Than the broad Hellespont in all his parts,

—so it shall stand, my dear, in the volume, you may rest assured; for though I have in my own mind stickled much for the insertion of the word *whole*, as in that place emphatical, I am become now a convert to your opinion, and judge the line mended by the change: smoother it is, no doubt, and sufficiently emphatical into the bargain.

Many thanks for Mr. Hornby's note, (whom, by the way, I before called Stanley, not being able to read his name, even in his own handwriting,) every such piece of information is a clap on the back, the effect of which I feel instantly in my head, and write the better for it. The Task has succeeded beyond my utmost expectations; if Homer succeed as well,—and it shall not fail through any negligence of mine, I shall account my fortune, as a poet, made for ever.

You must not think too highly of my loyalty. A true Whig always loves a good King. But this by

way of parenthesis.—I was going to observe that the day puts me in mind of June,—clear sun and soft air. Mrs. Unwin never walks in the garden without looking at the borders to consider which of all the flowers will be blown in June. She has my fear of strangers, but she has no fear of *you*. *Au contraire*, she, as well as somebody else, most heartily loves and long to see you.

Adieu, my dear coz. ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, March 29, 1786.

ANIMATED by the hope that, if you could be furnished with an abode at Olney, you might possibly make it in some sort the place of your residence, at least in the summer season, Mrs. Unwin and I have talked, thought, and enquired to the very bottom of that subject, and have been constantly occupied in it, ever since the receipt of your dear letter, which contains nothing but what is comfortable, and which contains some encouragement of an expectation that is more comfortable than all the rest. Olney, you are to understand, though much improved since our first acquaintance with it, is rather a poor town, and contains but one house except our own, that is not occupied by a trade, and that one is by no means to be got at. But we are just now come home after having taken an exact survey of such a one as is in many respects the very thing we wish, though not in all. It has what may fairly be called in the country, a very

good parlour, and very neatly furnished. Over it is a very good chamber, large and in good order; and in it a *very good bed.* It has also a kitchen, roomy enough, with a good fire-place close to a good sash window, and I believe in all respects commodious. There is also a very pretty garden, that has been famous in Olney these many years, for its neatness and smartness; and therein is a root-house, which will be at your service, and where you may drink tea if you choose it. It is so situated that you may walk into the country in three different directions, without having any part of the town to traverse. The rooms that you will occupy are all well sashed; the parlour window and the chamber window are both Venetian. The people themselves are very honest, sober, elderly folks, and quite respectable. They carry on a trade, but a very neat and silent one;—they are dealers in lace. The house has a modern face, and was rebuilt but a short time before we came to Olney. For these accommodations they ask twenty pounds a year. All this, my dear, is well, and pleases us at the heart. But now comes a difficulty; servants must be provided for, and how shall we find room for them? Adjoining to your chamber, for so I call it, I hope, prophetically, is a very decent room in which your own maid might repose herself to her wish. But then there is an apprentice in the case who at present has possession of it, for whom, while he stays, there is no other; and of whose departure there is no hope till the end of August. One of the maids might sleep with the maid of the house, if she has no objection to it; but the room that I have just mentioned is the only

spare servant's-room that the house affords. It might possibly be easy to find lodging for two servants at no great distance,—perhaps, at the next door, but your own woman should certainly be within call. Thus stands the case, my beloved cousin. But you will come, and you will see it all with your own eyes, and then we shall be able to remedy any defects better than we can without you. Do like it if you can. I should tell you that the situation is such that you will never be troubled with an afternoon or evening sun. It is within five minutes walk of our door. There is not in Olney, nor in all the neighbourhood of Olney, a ready-furnished house or lodging to be found besides. As to the rooms once occupied by Lady Austen, they are, alas! out of the question. She furnished them herself, and at present the walls are bare. They are in the vicarage, which at that time was occupied by curate, wife, and family. But that curate has removed to London, and now preaches at the Lock; and the present one is a single man, and has not, I suppose, much more furniture than the Shunamite bestowed upon Elisha when she lodged him on the wall of her house. We have learned, however, on enquiry, that two rooms excepted, the whole is vacant. The house that I have described, as far as parlour, chamber, and kitchen are concerned, is so exactly the thing that I think would suit you, that neither I nor Mrs. Unwin can help cherishing a hope that some way or other matters may be made to fadge.

I knew, my dear, that I should alarm you with my panegyric upon rough verses, and when I had ended all that I had to say upon this subject, I laughed, and

said to myself, now will my poor cousin expect nothing but rumble, rumble, rumble. I have said so much in praise of hobbling lines, that if she meets with a line that does not halt like a lame post-horse, she will think herself happy, and will say, Well done, cousin, that's something like! I wish it were always such! Well then, my cousin, as much of it shall be smooth and graceful, as I can possibly make so, and Mrs. Unwin can witness for me that I spare no labour. You are perfectly right in all that you have said on the matter; there can be no dignity in simplicity unless it have elegance also, and that is the point at which I drive continually. Fear not that you will take me from my business. For two hours every morning, and for the same time every evening, I determine to forget that you exist, and that to converse with you is to me worth more than all that Homer ever composed. You say I flatter you. I never did in my life. You have an admirable memory,—recollect if you can a single compliment that I ever paid you. No, my cousin, I did not flatter you, neither do I now, when I tell you that I never could find an opportunity.

Your kindness in visiting Johnson for my sake I feel sensibly, as I do, indeed, the whole long series of your unwearied and most friendly services. Though I hear from you but once a week, I have the comfort of knowing to a certainty that I am every day of the week in your thoughts, and if I wish at any time with more than common ardour for fame and honour, it is as much with a view to your gratification as my own. In truth, I believe I may say more, for I not unfrequently feel a most unaccountable stupidity on that subject,

and such a one as makes me wonder that I should ever acquire the smallest portion of either. But it is not always so. I rejoice that the General is pleased; if it pleases him to know that I have a warm and sincere affection for him, he may safely indulge himself in that persuasion.

Adieu, my ever beloved.

WM. COWPER.

See what habit has done, it has made me skip over the middle of the page without occasion. But I have two or three things in reserve that will fill it sufficiently. First for my health. Mrs. Unwin and I are both agreed that I have pumped as long as pumping is good. The last emetic sensibly did me harm. It is a week this day since I took it, and I have not yet recovered the effect of it. I have more fever and a more uneasy stomach than I had before. I mean therefore to discontinue the use of them for the present. I boasted that I was growing fat, but I may now boast that I am grown lean, which at my time of life is perhaps the prouder boast of the two. There is no better air in the world than the air of Olney in summer-time. The whole country is either rock or gravel at the depth of a few feet. But in the winter I suspect that it is rather agueish, for such distempers are very frequent here at that season; not that we rich rogues are ever so affected, the evil is confined merely to the poor. But we are built on the river's brink, and in the winter the adjoining meadows are often laid under water, which is, I suppose, the cause of it. I send you all that I have to send in the compli-

mentary style. A note of Lord Hamilton's that was rather flattering, I have burnt. Certain sayings of my poor friend Bagot when he was here, I do not send, because I have not the courage to write them. I have heard nothing more from him since the death of his amiable wife, but I have thought sometimes of writing to him again.—I have read Hannah More's Sacred Dramas with great pleasure; I honour her both for her subjects, and for the manner in which she has set them forth.—I could add, but want room.

Good bye, neighbour.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, April 1, 1786.

I HAVE made you wait long for an answer, and am now obliged to write in a hurry. But lest my longer silence should alarm you, hurried as I am, still I write. I told you, if I mistake not, that the circle of my correspondence has lately been enlarged; and it seems still increasing, which, together with my poetical business, makes an *hour* a *momentous* affair. Pardon an unintentional pun. You need not fear for my health. It suffers nothing by my employment. I hope also that you have no need to fear lest I should hereafter suffer by disappointment. No care shall be wanting on my part to guard against it. I return you many thanks for all your friendly services in the matter of subscription. When you saw Johnson that business was so much in its infancy, that it was not likely that many names should have been entered in his

book. Neither General Cowper, nor his son, nor Lady Hesketh have yet given in their lists. The latter has only communicated a few names at Johnson's, and probably a few at Walker's also, and at Debrett's, for the present honour of the catalogue, and that they may breed more. But the bulk of their collection is still in reserve. In the meantime they give me the warmest encouragement, and have no doubt themselves of a numerous subscription.—That the price should be thought too high, I must rather wonder. The immense labour of the work considered, and the price of Pope's first edition also considered, which was seven guineas, it does not appear to me extravagant. I question if there is a poet in the three kingdoms, or in any kingdom, who would sell such a commodity for less. Two or three guineas may now perhaps be as important as seven were fifty years ago, and I suppose that they are; but if every thing else is grown dearer, why should the produce of the brain in particular grow cheap? We may comfort ourselves, too, with reflecting that twenty subscribers at two guineas are just as good as forty at one.

We, who in general see no company, are at present in expectation of a great deal; at least, if three different visits may be called so. Mr. and Mrs. Powley, in the first place, are preparing for a journey southward. She is far from well, but thinks herself well enough to travel, and feels an affectionate impatience for another sight of Olney. A long time since I desired Johnson to send a volume of the Task to your house, intended for Mr. Powley. Mr. Emsal was to have taken it with him into the north, but Mr. Powley has

not received it, so I suppose that Johnson forgot. I shall be obliged to you if you will let me know.

In the next place, we expect, as soon as the season shall turn up bright and warm, General Cowper and his son. I have not seen him these twenty years and upwards; but our intercourse having been lately revived, is likely to become closer, warmer, and more intimate than ever.

Lady Hesketh also comes down in June; and if she can be accommodated with any thing in the shape of a dwelling at Olney, talks of making it always, in part, her summer residence. It has pleased God that I should, like Joseph, be put into a well; and because there are no Midianites in the way to deliver me, therefore my friends are coming down into the well to see me.

I wish you,—we both wish you, all happiness in your new habitation: at least, you will be sure to find the situation more commodious. I thank you for all your hints concerning my work, which shall be duly attended to. You may assure all whom it may concern, that all offensive elisions will be done away. With Mrs. Unwin's love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, I remain, my dear friend, affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

April 3, Mond. 1786.

HAVE you the hardiness to bid me wait till August for your coming, or even to suggest such an idea to me, who have been so long numbering off days and

weeks with impatient expectation of June? My cousin, I will not wait till August, neither can Mrs. Unwin wait till August. I insist, and she entreats, that you come at the time appointed. Is there any thing future to which we look forward with equal pleasure? With pleasure, indeed, we expect the General; I have not, save yourself, a friend whom I should expect with more; but you with pleasure peculiar and above all. Come then! difficulties will perhaps vanish at your appearance; fifty points may be adjusted when you are on the spot, not one of which can be touched without you. Of this be sure, that by some means or other you shall have a place at Olney. The project in hand will probably in the end succeed, and if it should not, others may be started, but not till you come. You have given a hope that will not be relinquished while in Olney may be found one brick or stone upon another. A lodging for the present is ready for you, even should you come to-morrow.

I love you, and thank you for all your hints concerning the General. Suspect not from any thing said above, that my affection for him is not as warm as you wish it to be. It is; and will, I doubt not, increase in fervour. But with him I have an intimacy to make. With you I have always had one, however long interrupted, and the place that you have held with me, you will ever hold, should we outlive the years of Methusalem. But, as I said, I thank you for those hints, and if he have any little likings to be gratified, (for who has not some?) you cannot do a kinder thing by us than to give us instruction in them all; for we sincerely wish to make his abode here as

pleasant to him as possible. Henry comes with him. Give me a little history of *him* also, for him I have never seen since he was an urchin. As to the affair of religious conversation, fear me not lest I should trespass upon his peace in that way. Your views, my dear, upon the subject of a proper conduct in that particular, are mine also. When I left St. Alban's, I left it under impressions of the existence of a God, and of the truth of Scripture, that I had never felt before. I had unspeakable delight in the discovery, and was impatient to communicate a pleasure to others that I found so superior to every thing that bears the name. This eagerness of spirit, natural to persons newly informed, and the less to be wondered at in me who had just emerged from the horrors of despair, made me imprudent, and, I doubt not, troublesome to many. Forgetting that I had not *those* blessings at my command, which it is God's peculiar prerogative to impart—spiritual light and affections, I required, in effect, of all with whom I conversed that they should see with my eyes; and stood amazed that the Gospel, which with me was all in all, should meet with opposition, or should occasion disgust in any. But the Gospel could not be the word of God if it did not; for it foretells its own reception among men, and describes it as exactly such. Good is intended, but harm is done too often by the zeal with which I was at that time animated. But as in affairs of this life, so in religious concerns likewise, experience begets some wisdom in all who are not incapable of being taught. I do not now, neither have I for a long time, made it my practice to force the subject of evangelical truth on any.

I received it not from man myself, neither can any man receive it from me. God is light, and from him all light must come: to *His* teaching, therefore, I leave those whom I was once so alert to instruct myself. If a man asks my opinion, or calls for an account of my faith, he shall have it; otherwise I trouble him not. Pulpits for preaching, and the parlour, the garden, and the walk abroad for friendly and agreeable conversation.

I am grieved at what you tell me of the General's state of health. I fear that he carries his death's wound about him. The precariousness of *his* life makes me feel, if possible, the more comfort that yours seems to be held by a stronger tenure. May you be spared as long as I am spared, for having found you again, I am determined never to lose you more. I am delighted too that my uncle at his years is so stout. May he long continue so!

Mr. Madan and I were never correspondents. Once or twice, however, I have had an occasional letter from him, and last Friday brought me another. I was, as you may suppose, surprised. He wrote merely to rectify, as he accounts it, my typography. *Placed* he would have printed *plac'd*, and so of all words terminating in *ed*, and usually in former times abridged. But I shall not accede,—I cannot indeed, to his counsel. Johnson long since, and the General lately, recommended to me the contrary practice; and the fashion of the day makes it necessary. It is also a real improvement, for the judgement corrects the eye, and in reading reduces the syllables to their just number: add to which, we have no need to make pronunciation

of our language more difficult to foreigners than it is of necessity, which yet must be the certain consequence of spelling one way and pronouncing another. For *plac'd*, according to the rule by which we make *c* before a consonant hard, ought to pronounced *plackd*. But too much of this. He wrote me a dry letter; but *some things* considered, it did him honour in my account, because it proves that he interests himself in my work, notwithstanding all.

I wrote, my dearest cousin, to the General on Saturday, and then told him that he would not receive my bundle of poetry in less than a fortnight. At that time I thought of detaining the third, fourth, and fifth books till I should have re-revised the first, and then that I would send them all at once. But I have changed my mind. Fuseli is at present out of work. It would not be civil to make him wait long for more, and the three last-mentioned books are ready; I shall therefore, as before, send them to you; you will communicate with the General; and he to Fuseli. They will set off on Wednesday by Wellingborough coach. The first quire destined to Dr. Maty's inspection I am now going to take in hand. Should I find it necessary to transcribe the whole or much of it, that business, and the correction of it together, will necessarily take time, but you shall have it as soon as possible. My dear, stroke my pate, and say that I am a good child. I send you, I suppose, above two thousand lines, and not two hundred in the whole of the first translation. In fact, I am making a new translation, and find that the work will be much a gainer by it. I grudge no pains so that I may but be a famous poet, and make

you as proud as I wish you to be of your cousin in a corner. *Apropos de ça*,—if I have not visited my neighbours, it has been owing to many lions in the way; to a dread of strangers, increased by having seen none for many years; to a total incapacity through indisposition, but very lately, in part, removed; and to necessity, arising from the following important consideration, I keep no horse, and the hackneys of Olney are not ostensible; chaises are become more expensive than ever, and some of the country gentlemen (Mr. Wright in particular) who have made advances, live too distant to be reached on foot. I have not sent to Kerr for these reasons; he depended, by his own avowal, principally on emetics, which seem to fail, though I have neither exceeded nor fallen short; the tincture that he has given me is, by his account of it, of two that are the best in the world for stomach cases, the most efficacious; therefore nothing better is to be expected from him of that kind: and the approaching summer gives me hope better founded than any I can build upon medicine, of open pores, and consequently of relief, if not of a cure. My fever is not worth a thought: I suppose I have had more or less of it almost all my life.—I am now rummaging things together.—I dedicate to whomsoever you shall choose.—I have two dozen of wine and four bottles.—If you should call at Debrett's, pray search the book for the name of Throckmorton in particular. I knew not that Sephus had so ennobled my subscription, till you told me. I hold myself much obliged to him, and so shall tell him, when time shall serve. I love and honour my uncle for his very handsome notice of me

on the occasion. Our politics do not jar; in principle we are two tallies. I only differ from you a little touching the king's head. He had, through ill advice or want of honesty, acted with great duplicity. He was either to reign or die; there was no alternative. None dared to trust him;—the axe was the consequence. Adieu, my dear fellow pilgrim in all our pleasant places, for such you shall be.

Ever affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

I tell you a remarkable coincidence of dates and events: I received your present of wine on my birthday, November 26; the desk on the 7th of December, the day when I left London; and my snuff-box, &c. from Anonymous on the 24th of January, on which day, twelve years ago, I plunged into a melancholy that made me almost an infant. I cannot bear to be so concise as want of room obliged me to be on the other side, respecting the wine. Your kindness in making the inquiry is to me better than the wine itself: this is a literal truth, and you may credit it without the least reserve. I had a little of my own when the hamper came, which is the cause of my present abundance. Once more bless you!

The most evident necessity presents itself for your coming in June. We just now learn that these clever apartments cannot be had. The son is to succeed the apprentice in the second chamber. We have offered a bed in our house during your stay, but it is not accepted. There is a tight little house opposite, which I dare say you may have, that will hold you and suite,

but it has a west aspect. Perhaps by open windows and curtains it might be kept cool. Mother and daughter only live in it.

Mrs. Unwin begs me to give her most affectionate respects. If you understood Latin, I could tell you, in an elegant line from Horace, how much we both think of you, and talk of you, and long to see you. Dearest cousin, adieu!

We have expedients *in petto* for settling you at Olney, some of which will surely succeed, but which we will not discuss till you come, that is to say—in June. This is positively the last postscript.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Monday, April 10, 1786.

THAT'S my good cousin! now I love you! now I will think of June as you do, that it is the pleasantest of all months, unless you should happen to be here in November too, and make it equally delightful. Before I shall have finished my letter, Mrs. Unwin will have taken a view of the house concerning which you inquire, and I shall be able to give you a circumstantial account of it. The man who built it is lately dead. He had been a common sailor, and assisted under Wolfe and Amherst at the taking of Quebec. When we came hither he was almost pennyless, but climbing by degrees into the lace-business, amassed money, and built the house in question. Just before he died, having an enterprising genius, he put almost his whole substance to hazard in sending a large cargo of lace to

America, and the venture failing, he has left his widow in penury and distress. For this reason, I conclude that she will have no objection to letting as much of her house as my cousin will have occasion for, and have therefore given you this short history of the matter. The bed is the best in the town, and the honest tar's folly was much laughed at, when it was known that he, who had so often swung in a hammock, had given twenty pounds for a bed. But now I begin to hope that he made a wiser bargain than once I thought it. She is no gentlewoman, as you may suppose, but she is nevertheless a very quiet, decent, sober body, and well respected among her neighbours.

But Hadley, my dearest cousin, what is to be said of Hadley? Only this at present, that having such an inhabitant as Mr. Burrows, and the hope belonging to it of such another inhabitant as yourself, it has all charms, all possible recommendations. Yes; had I the wings that David wished for, I would surely stretch them to their utmost extent that I might reach any place where I should have you to converse with perhaps half the year. But alas, my dear, instead of wings, I have a chain and a collar; the history of which collar and chain Mrs. Unwin shall give you when you come; else I would fly, and she would fly also, with the utmost alacrity to Hadley, or whithersoever you should call us, for Olney has no hold upon us in particular. Here have we no family connexions, no neighbours with whom we can associate, no friendships. If the country is pleasant, so also are other countries; and so far as income is concerned, we

should not, I suppose, find ourselves in a more expensive situation at Hadley, or any where, than here. But there are letts and hinderances which no power of man can remove, which will make your poor heart ache, my dear, when you come to know them. I will not say that they can never be removed, because I will not set bounds to that which has no bounds—the mercy of God; but of the removal of them there is no present apparent probability. I knew a Mr. Burrows once; it was when I lived in the Temple; so far knew him that we simpered at each other when we met, and on opposite sides of the way touched hats. This Mr. Burrows, though at that time a young man, was rather remarkable for corpulence, and yet tall. He was at the bar. On a sudden I missed him, and was informed soon after that he had taken orders. Is it possible that your Mr. Burrows and mine can be the same? The imagination is not famous for taking good likenesses of persons and faces that we never saw. In general the picture that we draw in our minds of an *inconnu* is of all possible pictures the most unlike the original. So it has happened to me in this instance: my fancy assured me that Mr. Burrows was a slim, elegant young man, dressed always to the very point of exactness, with a sharp face, a small voice, a delicate address, and the gentlest manners. Such was my dream of Mr. Burrows, and how my dream of him came to be such I know not, unless it arose from what I seemed to have collected out of the several letters in which you have mentioned him. From them I learned that he has wit, sense, taste, and genius, with which qualities I do not generally connect

the ideas of bulk and rotundity; and from them I also learned that he has numerous connexions at your end of the town, where the company of those who have any thing rough in their exterior is least likely to be coveted. So it must have come to pass that I made to myself such a very unsuitable representation of him. But I am not sorry that he is such as he is. He is no loser by the bargain, in my account. I am not the less delighted with his high approbation, and wish for no better fortune as a poet, than always so to please such men as Mr. Burrows. I will not say, my dear, that you yourself gain any advantage in my opinion by the difference; for to seat you higher there than you were always seated, is not possible. I will only observe in this instance, as always in all instances, I discover a proof of your own good sense and discernment, who finding in Mr. Burrows a mind so deserving of your esteem and regard, have not suffered your eye to prejudice you against it; a *faux pas* into which I have known ladies of very good understanding betrayed ere now, I assure you. Had there been a question last year of our meeting at Olney, I should have felt myself particularly interested in this inattention of yours to the figure, for the sake of its contents; for at that time I had rather more body than it became a man who pretends to public approbation as a poet, to carry about him. But, thanks to Dr. Kerr, I do not at present measure an inch more in the girth than is perfectly consistent with the highest pretensions in that way. Apollo himself is hardly less chargeable with prominence about the waist than I am.

I by no means insist upon making ladies of the

Trojan women, unless I can reconcile you to the term. But I must observe in the first place, that though in our language the word be of modern use, it is likewise very ancient. We read in our oldest Bibles of the elect *Lady*, and of Babylon the *Lady* of kingdoms. In the next place, the Grecians, Homer at least, when a woman of rank is accosted, takes care in many instances that she shall be addressed in a style suited to her condition, for which purpose he employs a word more magnificent in its amount than even lady, and which literally signifies very little less than goddess. The word that I mean—that I may make it legible to you, is *Daimonie*. There were, no doubt, in Troy,—but I will say no more of it. I have that to write about to my English lady, that makes all the ladies of antiquity nothing worth to me.

We are this moment returned from the house above mentioned. The parlour is small and neat, not a mere cupboard, but very passable: the chamber is better, and quite smart. There is a little room close to your own for Mrs. Eaton, and there is room for Cookee and Samuel. The terms are half a guinea a week; but it seems as if we were never to take a step without a stumble. The kitchen is bad,—it has, indeed, never been used except as a washhouse; for people at Olney do not eat and drink as they do in other places. I do not mean, my dear, that they quaff nectar or feed on ambrosia, but *tout au contraire*. So what must be done about this abominable kitchen? It is out of doors: that is not amiss. It has neither range nor jack: that is terrible. But then range and jack are not unattainables; they may be easily supplied. And

if it were not—abominable kitchen that it is, no bigger than half an egg-shell, shift might be made. The good woman is content that your servants should eat and drink in her parlour, but expects that they shall disperse themselves when they have done. But whither, who can say? unless into the arbour in the garden, for that they should solace themselves in said kitchen were hardly to be expected. While I write this, Mrs. U. is gone to attempt a treaty with the linendraper over the way, which, if she succeeds, will be best of all, because the rooms are better, and it is just at hand. I must halt till she returns.—She returns;—nothing done. She is gone again to another place. Once more I halt. Again she returns and opens the parlour door with these tidings:—"I have succeeded beyond my utmost hopes. I went to Maurice Smith's, (he you must know, my dear, is a Jack-of-all-trades;) I said, do you know if Mr. Brightman could and would let lodgings ready furnished to a lady with three servants? Maurice's wife calls out, (she is a Quaker,) 'Why dost thee not take the vicarage?' I replied, There is no furniture. 'Pshaw!' quoth Maurice's wife; 'we will furnish it for thee, and at the lowest rate:—from a bed to a platter we will find all.'—And what do you intend now? said I to Mrs. Unwin. "Why now," quoth she, "I am going to the curate to hear what *he* says." So away she goes, and in about twenty minutes returns.—"Well, now it is all settled. Lady H. is to have all the vicarage, except two rooms, at the rate of ten guineas a year; and Maurice will furnish it for five guineas from June to November, inclusive." So, my dear,

you and your train are provided for to my heart's content. They are Lady Austen's lodgings, only with more room, and at the same price. You have a parlour sixteen feet by fourteen, chamber ditto; a room for your own maid, near to your own, that I have occupied many a good time; an exceeding good garret for Cookee, and another ditto, at a convenient distance, for Samuel; a cellar, a good kitchen, the use of the garden;—in short, all that you can want. Give us our commission in your next, and all shall be ready by the first of June. You will observe, my beloved cousin, that it is not in all above eight shillings a week in the whole year, or but a trifle more. And the furniture is really smart, and the beds good. But you must find your own linen. Come then, my beloved cousin, for I am determined that, whatsoever king shall reign, you shall be *Vicar* of Olney. Come and cheer my heart. I have left many things unsaid, but shall note them another time. Adieu!

Ever yours,

W. C.

I am so charmed with the subject that concludes my letter that I grudge every inch of paper to any other. Yet must I allow myself space to say that Lord Dartmouth's behaviour to you at the concert has won my heart to him more than ever. It was such a well-timed kindness to me, and so evidently performed with an equal design of giving pleasure to you, that I love him for it at my heart. I have never, indeed, at any time, had occasion to charge him, as I know that many have done, with want of warmth in his friend-

ship.—I honour you, my dear, for your constellation of nobles. I rejoice that the contents of my box have pleased you: may I never write any thing that does not! My friend Bull brought me to-day the last Gentleman's Magazine. There your cousin is held up again. Oh rare coz!

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, April 17, 1786.

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautiful as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour, nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the roundabout by the town, and make both houses one.

Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter; but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces; but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelvemonth! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprizing me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is, and ever shall be so sacred

to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions, lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be; but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it; and so content that, though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort, or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again. I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his

house; but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie, cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's enquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once is certain. The Duchess of ———, who in the world set her a-going? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

YOUR letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin: follow my laudable example,—write when you can; take Time's forelock in

one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me, or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions I shall not have a scrap left,—and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart,) you must not forget that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come! A pretty story truly. I am a *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled, as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me, for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry

by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel, above alluded to, came from—whom do you think? From ———, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned, and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from ——— I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but, being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come.

Adieu!

W. C.

You enquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as of our rides: they are beautiful. You enquire also concerning a cellar: you have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks, and then!

TO LADY HESKETH.

May 1, 1786.

You need not trouble yourself, my dearest cousin, about paper, my kind and good friend the General having undertaken of his own mere motion to send me all that I ever want, whether for transcript or correspondence. My dear, there is no possible project within the compass of invention, by which you can be released from the necessity of keeping your own nags at Olney, if you keep your carriage here. At the Swan they have no horses, or, which is equally negative in such a case, they have but one. At the Bull, indeed, they keep a chaise; but, not to mention the disagreeable of using one inn and hiring from another, or the extortionate demands that the woman of the Bull ever makes when any thing either gentle or noble is so unhappy as to fall into her hands, her steeds are so seldom disengaged, that you would find the disappointments endless. The chaise of course is engaged equally, and the town of Olney affords nothing else into which you could put your person. All these matters taken together, and another reason with them, which I shall presently subjoin,—it appeared to us so indispensable a requisite to your comfort here that you should have your own, both carriage and horses, that we have this day actually engaged accommodation for them at the Swan aforesaid.

Our walks are, as I told you, beautiful; but it is a walk to get at them; and though when you come, I shall take you into training, as the jockeys say, I doubt not that I shall make a nimble and good walker

of you in a short time, you would find, as even I do in warm weather, that the preparatory steps are rather too many in number. Weston, which is our pleasantest retreat of all, is a mile off, and there is not in that whole mile to be found so much shade as would cover you. Mrs. Unwin and I have for many years walked thither every day in the year, when the weather would permit; and to speak like a poet, the limes and the elms of Weston can witness for us both how often we have sighed and said,—"Oh! that our garden opened into this grove, or into this wilderness! for we are fatigued before we reach them, and when we have reached them, have not time enough to enjoy them." Thus stands the case, my dear, and the unavoidable *ergo* stares you in the face. Would *I* could do so too just at this moment!—We have three or four other walks, which are all pleasant in their way; but, except one, they all lie at such a distance as you would find heinously incommodious. But Weston, as I said before, is our favourite: of that we are never weary; its superior beauties gained it our preference at the first, and for many years it has prevailed to win us away from all the others. There was, indeed, some time since, in a neighbouring parish called Lavendon, a field, one side of which formed a terrace, and the other was planted with poplars, at whose foot ran the Ouse, that I used to account a little paradise: but the poplars have been felled, and the scene has suffered so much by the loss, that though still in point of prospect beautiful, it has not charms sufficient to attract me now. A certain poet wrote a copy of verses on this melancholy occasion, which, though they have

been printed, I dare say you never saw. When you come, therefore, you shall see them; but, as I told you in my last, not before. No, my dear, not a moment sooner; and for the reason in my last given I shall disobey your mandate with respect to those of F. Hill; and for another reason also:—if I copy them, they will occupy all the rest of my paper, which I cannot spare; and if I enclose the original, I must send my packet to Palace Yard, and you finding that the postman passed your door without dropping a letter from me would conclude that I had neglected to write; and I will not incur such a suspicion in your mind for a moment.

On Saturday,—for sooner than Saturday, we could not, on account of the weather,—we paid our visit at Weston, and a very agreeable visit we found it. We encountered there, besides the family, four ladies, all strange to us. One of them was a Miss Bagot, a sister of my friend Walter's; and another of them was a Mrs. Chester, his sister-in-law. Mr. Chester, his brother, lives at Chicheley, about four miles from Olney. Poor Mrs. Bagot was remembered with tears by Mrs. Chester: she is by every body's account of her a most amiable woman. Such also, I dare say, is Miss Bagot; but the room in which we were received was large, and she sitting at the side of it, exactly opposite to me, I had neither lungs nor courage to halloo at her; therefore nothing passed between us. I chatted a good deal with my neighbours; but you know, my dear, I am not famous for vociferation where there are ears not much accustomed to my voice. Nothing can be more obliging than the beha-

viour of the Throckmorton's has ever been to us: they long since gave us the keys of all their retreats, even of their kitchen-garden. And that you may not suspect your cousin of being any other than a very obliging creature too, I will give you a stroke of his politesse. When they were here they desired to see the garden and greenhouse. I am proud of neither, except in poetry, because there I can fib without lying, and represent them better than they are. However, I conducted them to the sight, and having set each of the ladies with her head in a bush of myrtle, I took out my scissors and cut a bouquet for each of them. When we were with *them* Mrs. Throckmorton told me that she had put all the slips into water, for she should be so glad to make them grow, and asked me if they would strike root. I replied, that I had known such things happen, but believed that they were very rare, and recommended a hot-bed rather, and she immediately resolved that they should have one. Now comes the period at which your cousin shines. In the evening I ordered my labourer to trundle up a wheelbarrow of myrtles and canary lavender, (a most fragrant plant,) to Weston, with which I sent a note to Mrs. Throckmorton, recommending them to her protection. *Dites moi, ma chere, ne suis-je homme tout à fait poli?*

Weston, as I told you, is about a mile off, but in truth it is rather more. Gayhurst is five miles off: I have walked there, but I never walked thither. I have not these many years been such an extravagant tramper as I once was. I did myself no good I be-

lieve by pilgrimages of such immoderate length. The Chesters, the Throckmortons, the Wrights, are all of them good-natured agreeable people, and I rejoice, for your sake, that they lie all within your beat. Of the rest of our neighbours I know nothing. They are not, indeed, many. A Mr. Praed lives at a seat called Tyringham, which is also about five miles hence; but him I never saw, save once, when I saw him jump over a rail at Weston. There is a Mr. Towers at a place called Astwoodberry, about seven miles off; but he is a foxhunter merely: and Lord Egmont dwelt in a hired house at a place called Woolaston, at the same distance; but he hired it merely by way of kennel to hold him during the hunting season, and by this time, I suppose, has left it.

The copper is going to work for you again. Fifty gallons of good beer, added to seventy, will serve to moisten your maidens' lips, and the throats of your lacqueys and your coachee's, till the season for brewing returns, for it does not succeed in warm weather.

Mrs. Unwin sends you her affections; and the words that follow I take from her mouth as she delivers them: "Tell Lady Hesketh that I have the sincerest complacency in the expectation of her; and in observing how all things concur and coincide that can bid fair to make her stay at Olney agreeable, insomuch that she seems only to wave her pen and the thing she wants springs up in an instant." May Heaven bless you, my ever dear, dear cousin.

Farewell. Yours,

WM. COWPER.

I have heard that Dr. Maty has criticised my specimen with asperity. Is there any truth in this, and how much? or is there none? It has vexed me.—I have a fine passion-tree in a green tub, that I destine to your parlour chimney: it will be full of flowers.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I DID not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hearsay. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself enclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter indeed that he had cut from the newspaper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured; and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the

translation is far from exact, is best known to himself. For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted,—the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hypercriticisms; I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows:

"One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way at once so plain, and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which on the whole I admire exceedingly, thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring, that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme."——

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them, by vexatious objections made without end by ——, and his friend, and altered, and altered, till

at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for ——'s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy,—but I would mumble her well, if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the Chancellor with a view to emolument. I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces, of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme; them he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come therefore my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I: come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the reestablishment of your cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in us your constant companions, two who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If

you are in any danger of trouble, it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me; but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a creature under heaven, from whose co-operations with Mrs. Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive; but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention: I mean of the word *hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it, a *modern* invention. In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who, in his judgement of classical matters, is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it. But the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove opposite to the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for

nearer neighbours. If you, my cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered up all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejectment; whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter. A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece that you remember was called the Shrubbery. The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and faggoted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig,—nothing but stumps about as high as my ancle. Mrs. Throckmorton told us that she never saw her husband so angry in her life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion. But had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it, both from the papers, and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he

live, and live to be still the support of Government! If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it. But Heaven knows, that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.—May God be ever with you, my beloved cousin!

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, May 15, 1786.

FROM this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently and most comfortably hope that before the fifteenth of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded, nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and, blessed be God! they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then in the course of an existence, whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it (canst thou tell me?) that together with all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful; flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure,

that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting; and such I suppose feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know beforehand that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you; and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been foreordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is nothing such, no, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none, if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams: they are illusions of the judgement. Some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us; and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of it. Nothing that is such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so

shall I: but we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long I trust as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme; am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last would at any time restore my spirits, and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have, (what, perhaps, you little suspect me of,) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.*

But with it I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing that, till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that at so late a period was yet open to me; and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion into notice. Every thing therefore that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me: but you will not; and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath*, (that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it,) more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymer, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to

be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise; and the consequence has been that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is,—"Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more."

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, May 20, 1786.

ABOUT three weeks since I met your sister Chester at Mr. Throckmorton's, and from her learned that you are at Blithfield, and in health. Upon the encouragement of this information it is that I write now; I should not otherwise have known with certainty where to find you, or have been equally free from the fear of unseasonable intrusion. May God be with you, my friend, and give you a just measure of submission to his will, the most effectual of all remedies for the evils of this changing scene. I doubt not that he has granted you this blessing already, and may he still continue it!

Now I will talk a little about myself: for except myself, living in this *terrarum angulo*, what can I have to talk about? In a scene of perfect tranquillity, and the profoundest silence, I am kicking up the dust of heroic narrative, and besieging Troy again. I told you that I had almost finished the translation of the Iliad, and I verily thought so;—but I was never more

mistaken. By the time when I had reached the end of the poem, the first book of my version was a twelvemonth old. When I came to consider it, after having laid it by so long, it did not satisfy me. I set myself to mend it, and I did so. But still it appeared to me improvable, and that nothing would so effectually secure that point as to give the whole book a new translation. With the exception of very few lines I have so done, and was never in my life so convinced of the soundness of Horace's advice to publish nothing in haste; so much advantage have I derived from doing that twice which I thought I had accomplished notably at once. He indeed recommends nine years' imprisonment of your verses before you send them abroad: but the ninth part of that time is I believe as much as there is need of to open a man's eyes upon his own defects, and to secure him from the danger of premature self-approbation. Neither ought it to be forgotten that nine years make so wide an interval between the cup and the lip, that a thousand things may fall out between. New engagements may occur, which may make the finishing of that which a poet has begun impossible. In nine years he may rise into a situation, or he may sink into one utterly incompatible with his purpose. His constitution may break in nine years, and sickness may disqualify him for improving what he enterprised in the days of health. His inclination may change, and he may find some other employment more agreeable, or another poet may enter upon the same work, and get the start of him. Therefore, my friend Horace, though I acknowledge your principle to be good, I must confess that I think the

practice you would ground upon it carried to an extreme. The rigour that I exercised upon the first book, I intend to exercise upon all that follow, and have now actually advanced into the middle of the seventh, no where admitting more than one line in fifty of the first translation. You must not imagine that I had been careless and hasty in the first instance. In truth I had not; but in rendering so excellent a poet as Homer into our language, there are so many points to be attended to, both in respect of language and numbers, that a first attempt must be fortunate indeed if it does not call aloud for a second. You saw the specimen, and you saw, I am sure, one great fault in it: I mean the harshness of some of the elisions. I do not altogether take the blame of these to myself, for into some of them I was actually driven and hunted by a series of reiterated objections made by a critical friend, whose scruples and delicacies teased me out of all my patience. But no such monsters will be found in the volume.

Your brother Chester has furnished me with Barnes's Homer, from whose notes I collect here and there some useful information, and whose fair and legible type preserves me from the danger of being as blind as was my author. I saw a sister of yours at Mr. Throckmorton's; but I am not good at making myself heard across a large room, and therefore nothing passed between us. I felt, however, that she was my friend's sister, and much esteemed her for your sake.

Ever yours,

W. C.

P. S. The swan is called *argutus* (I suppose) *a non arguendo*, and *canorus a non canendo*. But whether he be dumb or vocal, more poetical than the eagle or less, it is no matter. A feather of either, in token of your approbation and esteem, will never, you may rest assured, be an offence to me.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I HAVE at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a bandbox, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meet

ing you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loath to know it again.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered, while we were in the wilderness. So, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears so he may; in which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me, that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the

same cause. I have a notion, that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that you have sent me;—all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language; and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman: the taste and the judgement will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the Task was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicksome mood, upon my friend:—we were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines,—

> The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,
> And seeking grace to' improve the present good,
> Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *nonchalance*, "Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they?" He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied,—"O, I will tell you where they must be;—in the Night Thoughts." I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion; but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence,—at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for

your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines; and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine neither, that I am on the whole in any great degree subject to nervous affections. Occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection; but at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me;—I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Bluedevil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin! God grant that our friendship which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever!

For you must know that I should not love you half

so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be,

Yours for ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

THOU dear, comfortable cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure; for which therefore I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so,) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long; to my impatience at least it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes! Still however there will be roses, and jasmine, and honey-suckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the

advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights at least will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dewdrops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his Muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly.

Do not suppose, or suspect that I treat you with reserve; there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add, for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess then, my beloved cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure, but peace of mind,—at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me; but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney, may perhaps make it an abiding one.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786.

Ah! my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you! I have no fears of *you;* on the contrary am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door. You should soon see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? who used to read to you, laugh [illegible] till our sides

have ached, at any thing, or nothing? And am I in these respects at all altered? You will not find me so; but just as ready to laugh, and to wander, as you ever knew me. A cloud perhaps may come over me now and then, for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's, in Norfolk Street? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle and aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows; that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not that I shall delight even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature who I suppose was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise, he shall make my coach when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner; we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain,

and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore all but one I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject,—their own religion. I happened to say that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times no doubt to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies in the mean time were tête-à-tête in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it.

In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when

told what she said of him; and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am however not at all in arrear to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know them, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday from the General another letter of T. S. An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf, I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest cousin, adieu! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But oh! this coachmaker, and oh! this holiday week!

Yours, with impatient desire to see you,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Olney, June 9, 1786.

THE little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry is as you may suppose stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no schoolboy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me if at present I am both unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed,

and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again if he survive; yet of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connexion never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse, which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a letter some time since from your sister Fanny, that gave me great pleasure. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten, when we are gone who composed it; but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer,—

"To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tailed."

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it. I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found a lodg-

ings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

June 12, 1786.

I AM neither young nor superannuated, yet am I a child. When I had read your letter I grumbled:—not at you, my dearest cousin, for you are in no fault, but at the whole generation of coach-makers, as you may suppose, and at yours in particular. I foresaw and foreknew that he would fail in his promise, and yet was disappointed; was, in truth, no more prepared for what I expected with so much reason, than if I had not at all expected it. I grumbled till we went to dinner, and at intervals till we had dined; and when dinner was over, with very little encouragement, I could actually have cried. And if I had, I should in truth have thought them tears as well bestowed as most that I have shed for many years. At first I numbered months, then weeks, then days, and was just beginning to number hours, and now I am thrown back to days again. My first speech was, after folding up your letter, (for I will honestly tell you all,) I am crazed with Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, and St. Alban's, and Totteridge, and Hadley. When is she to set out?—When is she to be here? Do tell me, for perhaps, you understand it better than I. Why, says Mrs. Unwin, (with much more composure in her

air than properly belonged to her, for she also had her feelings on the occasion,) she sets out to-morrow se'nnight, and will be here on the Wednesday after. And who knows that? replied I; will the coach-maker be at all more punctual in repairing the old carriage, than in making the new one? For my part, I have no hope of seeing her this month; and if it be possible, I will not think of it, lest I should be again disappointed. And to say the truth, my dear, though hours have passed since thus I said, and I have had time for cooler consideration, the suspicion still sticks close to me, that more delays may happen. A philosopher would prepare himself for such an event, but I am no philosopher, at least when the comfort of seeing you is in question. I believe in my heart that there have been just as many true philosophers upon earth, as there have been men that have had little or no feeling, and not one more. Swift truly says—

> Indifference clad in reason's guise,
> All want of fortitude supplies.

When I wake in the night, I feel my spirits the lighter because you are coming. When I am not at Troy, I am either occupied in the recollection of a thousand passages of my past life, in which you were a partaker with me, or conversing about you with Mrs. Unwin. Thus my days and nights have been spent principally ever since you determined upon this journey, and especially, and almost without interruption from any other subject, since the time of your journey has seemed near at hand. While I despaired, as I did for many years, that I should ever see you more, I

thought of you, indeed, and often, but with less solicitude. I used to say to myself; Providence has so ordered it, and it is my duty to submit. He has cast me at a distance from her, and from all whom I once knew. He did it, and not I.; it is He who has chosen my situation for me. Have I not reason to be thankful that, since he designed me to pass a part of my life, and no inconsiderable one neither, in a state of the deepest melancholy, he appointed me a friend in Mrs. Unwin, who should share all my sorrows with me, and watch over me in my helpless condition, night and day? What, and where had I been without her? Such considerations were sufficient to reconcile me at that time to perpetual separation even from you, because perpetual I supposed it must be, and without remedy. But now every hour of your absence seems long, for this very natural reason, because the same Providence has given me a hope that you will be present with me soon. A good that seems at an immeasureable distance, and that we cannot hope to reach, has therefore the less influence on our affections. But the same good brought nearer, made to appear practicable, promised to our hopes, and almost in possession, engages all our faculties and desires. All this is according to the natural and necessary course of things in the human heart; and the philosophy that would interfere with it, is folly at least, if not frenzy. A throne has at present but little sensible attraction for me. And why? Perhaps only because I know that should I break my heart with wishes for a throne, I should never reach one. But did I know assuredly that I should put on a crown to-morrow, perhaps I too should

feel ambition, and account the interposing night tedious. The sum of the whole matter, my dear, is this: that this villanous coach-maker has mortified me monstrously, and that I tremble lest he should do so again. From you I have no fears. I see in your letter, and all the way through it, what pains you take to assure me and give me comfort. I am and will be comforted for that very reason; and will wait still other ten days with all the patience that I can muster. You, I know, will be punctual if you can, and that at least is matter of real consolation.

I approve altogether, my cousin beloved, of your sending your goods to the waggon on Saturday, and cookee by the coach on Tuesday. She will be here perhaps by four in the afternoon, at the latest by five, and will have quite time enough to find out all the cupboards and shelves in her department before you arrive. But I declare and protest that cookee shall sleep that night at our house, and get her breakfast here next morning. You will break her heart, child, if you send her into a strange house where she will find nothing that has life but the curate, who has not much neither. Servant he keeps none. A woman makes his bed, and after a fashion as they say, dresses his dinner, and then leaves him to his lucubrations. I do therefore insist on it, and so does Mrs. Unwin, that cookee shall be our guest for that time; and from this we will not depart. I tell thee besides, that I shall be more glad to see her, than ever I was in my life to see one whom I never saw before. Guess why, if you can.

You must number your miles fifty-six instead of fifty-four. The fifty-sixth mile ends but a few yards beyond the carriage. Soon after you shall have entered Olney, you will find an opening on your right hand. It is a lane that leads to your dwelling. There your coach may stop and set down Mrs. Eaton: when she has walked about forty yards she will spy a green gate and rails on her left hand: and when she has opened the gate and reached the house-door, she will find herself at home. But we have another manœuvre to play off upon you, and in which we positively will not be opposed, or if we are, it shall be to no purpose. I have an honest fellow that works in my garden, his name is Kitchener, and we call him Kitch for brevity. He is sober, and as trusty as the day. He has a smart blue coat, that when I had worn it some years, I gave him, and he has now worn it some years himself. I shall set him on horseback, and order him to the Swan at Newport, there to wait your arrival, and if you should not stop at that place, as perhaps you may not, immediately to throw himself into your suite, and to officiate as your guide. For though the way from Newport hither is short, there are turnings that might puzzle your coachman: and he will be of use too, in conducting you to our house, which otherwise you might not easily find, partly through the stupidity of those of whom you might inquire, and partly from its out-of-the-way situation. My brother drove up and down Olney in quest of us, almost as often as you up and down Chancery Lane in quest of the Madans, with fifty boys and girls at his tail, before he could

find us. The first man, therefore, you shall see in a blue coat with white buttons, in the famous town of Newport, cry Kitch! He will immediately answer, My Lady! and from that moment you are sure not to be lost.

Your house shall be as clean as scrubbing and dry-rubbing can make it, and in all respects fit to receive you. My friend the Quaker, in all that I have seen of his doings, has acquitted himself much to my satisfaction. Some little things, he says, will perhaps be missing at first, in such a multiplicity, but they shall be produced as soon as called for. Mrs. U. has bought you six ducks, and is fatting them for you. She has also rummaged up a coop that will hold six chickens, and designs to people it for you by the first opportunity; for these things are not to be got fit for the table at Olney. Thus, my dear, are all things in the best train possible, and nothing remains but that you come and show yourself. Oh, that moment! Shall we not both enjoy it?—That we shall.

I have received an anonymous complimentary Pindaric Ode from a little poet who calls himself a schoolboy. I send you the first stanza by way of specimen. You shall see it all soon.

TO WM. COWPER, OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.

ON HIS POEMS IN THE SECOND VOLUME.

In what high strains, my Muse, wilt thou
Attempt great Cowper's worth to show?
Pindaric strains shall tune the lyre,
And 'twould require
A Pindar's fire

You must number your miles fifty-six instead of fifty-four. The fifty-sixth mile ends but a few yards beyond the vicarage. Soon after you shall have entered Olney, you will find an opening on your right hand. It is a lane that leads to your dwelling. There your coach may stop and set down Mrs. Eaton; when she has walked about forty yards she will spy a green gate and rails on her left hand; and when she has opened the gate and reached the house-door, she will find herself at home. But we have another manœuvre to play off upon you, and in which we positively will not be opposed, or if we are, it shall be to no purpose. I have an honest fellow that works in my garden, his name is Kitchener, and we call him Kitch for brevity. He is sober, and as trusty as the day. He has a smart blue coat, that when I had worn it some years, I gave him, and he has now worn it some years himself. I shall set him on horseback, and order him to the Swan at Newport, there to wait your arrival, and if you should not stop at that place, as perhaps you may not, immediately to throw himself into your suite, and to officiate as your guide. For though the way from Newport hither is short, there are turnings that might puzzle your coachman; and he will be of use too, in conducting you to our house, which otherwise you might not easily find, partly through the stupidity of those of whom you might inquire, and partly from its out-of-the-way situation. My brother drove up and down Olney in quest of us, almost as often as you up and down Chancery Lane in quest of the Madans, with fifty boys and girls at his tail, before he could

find us. The first man, therefore, you shall see in a blue coat with white buttons, in the famous town of Newport, cry Kitch! He will immediately answer, My Lady! and from that moment you are sure not to be lost.

Your house shall be as clean as scrubbing and dry-rubbing can make it, and in all respects fit to receive you. My friend the Quaker, in all that I have seen of his doings, has acquitted himself much to my satisfaction. Some little things, he says, will perhaps be missing at first, in such a multiplicity, but they shall be produced as soon as called for. Mrs. U. has bought you six ducks, and is fatting them for you. She has also rummaged up a coop that will hold six chickens, and designs to people it for you by the first opportunity; for these things are not to be got fit for the table at Olney. Thus, my dear, are all things in the best train possible, and nothing remains but that you come and show yourself. Oh, that moment! Shall we not both enjoy it?—That we shall.

I have received an anonymous complimentary Pindaric Ode from a little poet who calls himself a schoolboy. I send you the first stanza by way of specimen. You shall see it all soon.

TO WM. COWPER, OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.

ON HIS POEMS IN THE SECOND VOLUME.

In what high strains, my Muse, wilt thou
Attempt great Cowper's worth to show?
Pindaric strains shall tune the lyre,
And 'twould require
A Pindar's fire

To sing great Cowper's worth,
The lofty bard, delightful sage,
Ever the wonder of the age,
And *blessing to the earth.*

Adieu, my precious cousin, your lofty bard and delightful sage expects you with all possible affection.

Ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

I am truly sorry for your poor friend Burrows!

Our dinner hour is four o'clock. We will not surfeit you with delicacies; of that be assured. I know your palate, and am glad to know that it is easily pleased. Were it other than it is, it would stand but a poor chance to be gratified at Olney. I undertake for lettuce and cucumber, and Mrs. U. for all the rest. If she feeds you too well, you must humble her.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 19, 1786.

My dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village two miles distant we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable

landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, Olney, July 3, 1786.

AFTER a long silence I begin again. A day given to my friends, is a day taken from Homer, but to such an interruption, now and then occurring, I have no objection. Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases every body, and is pleased in her turn with every thing she finds at Olney; is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her. This disposition in her is the more comfortable, because it is not the humour of the day, a sudden flash of benevolence and good spirits, occasioned merely by a change of scene; but it is her natural turn, and has governed all her conduct ever since I knew her first.

We are consequently happy in her society, and shall be happier still to have you to partake with us in our joy. I can now assure you that her complexion is not at all indebted to art, having seen a hundred times the most convincing proof of its authenticity, her colour fading, and glowing again alternately as the weather, or her own temperature has happened to affect it, while she has been sitting before me. I am fond of the sound of bells, but was never more pleased with those of Olney than when they rang her into her new habitation. It is a compliment that our performers upon those instruments have never paid to any other personage (Lord Dartmouth excepted) since we knew the town. In short, she is, as she ever was, my pride and my joy, and I am delighted with every thing that means to do her honour. Her first appearance was too much for me; my spirits, instead of being greatly raised, as I had inadvertently supposed they would be, broke down with me under the pressure of too much joy, and left me flat, or rather melancholy throughout the day, to a degree that was mortifying to myself, and alarming to her. But I have made amends for this failure since, and in point of cheerfulness have far exceeded her expectations, for she knew that sable had been my suit for my years.

And now I shall communicate intelligence that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother dwelt in it. Your view of it was not only just, but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purpose of incar-

ceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand. The bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us, and the expense of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us; and the house is large enough to contain us, and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will I hope prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood, there we shall have most agreeable neighbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy smelling fumes of the marsh miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. A pretty deal of new furniture will be wanted, espe-

cially chairs and beds, all which my kind cousin will provide, and fit up a parlour and a chamber for herself into the bargain. So far is well, the rest is left to Heaven.

I have hardly left myself room for an answer to your queries concerning my friend John, and his studies. What the supplement of Hirtius is made of, I know not. We did not read it at Westminster. I should imagine it might be dispensed with. I should recommend the civil war of Cæsar, because he wrote it, who ranks I believe as the best writer, as well as soldier, of his day. There are books (I know not what they are, but you do, and can easily find them) that will inform him clearly of both the civil and military management of the Romans, the several officers, I mean, in both departments; and what was the peculiar province of each. The study of some such book would I should think prove a good introduction to that of Livy, unless you have a Livy with notes to that effect. A want of intelligence in those points has heretofore made the Roman history very dark and difficult to me; therefore I thus advise.

Our love is with all your lovelies, both great and small.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, July 4, 1786.

I REJOICE, my dear friend, that you have at last received my proposals, and most cordially thank you for all your labours in my service. I have friends in the world who, knowing that I am apt to be careless when left to myself, are determined to watch over me with a jealous eye upon this occasion. The consequence will be, that the work will be better executed, but more tardy in the production. To them I owe it, that my translation, as fast as it proceeds, passes under a revisal of the most accurate discerner of all blemishes. I know not whether I told you before, or now tell you for the first time, that I am in the hands of a very extraordinary person. He is intimate with my bookseller, and voluntarily offered his service. I was at first doubtful, whether to accept it or not; but finding that my friends abovesaid were not to be satisfied on any other terms, though myself a perfect stranger to the man and his qualifications, except as he was recommended by Johnson, I at length consented, and have since found great reason to rejoice that I did. I called him an extraordinary person, and such he is; for he is not only versed in Homer, and accurate in his knowledge of the Greek to a degree that entitles him to that appellation, but, though a foreigner, is a perfect master of our language, and has exquisite taste in English poetry. By his assistance I have improved many passages, supplied many oversights, and corrected many mistakes, such as will of course escape the most diligent and attentive labourer in such a work. I ought

to add, because it affords the best assurance of his zeal and fidelity, that he does not toil for hire, nor will accept of any premium, but has entered on this business merely for his amusement. In the last instance my sheets will pass through the hands of our old schoolfellow Colman, who has engaged to correct the press, and make any little alterations that he may see expedient. With all this precaution, little as I intended it once, I am now well satisfied. Experience has convinced me that other eyes than my own are necessary, in order that so long and arduous a task may be finished as it ought, and may neither discredit me, nor mortify and disappoint my friends. You, who I know interest yourself much and deeply in my success, will I dare say be satisfied with it too. Pope had many aids, and he who follows Pope ought not to walk alone.

Though I announce myself by my very undertaking to be one of Homer's most enraptured admirers, I am not a blind one. Perhaps the speech of Achilles given in my specimen is, as you hint, rather too much in the moralizing strain, to suit so young a man, and of so much fire. But whether it be or not, in the course of the close application that I am forced to give to my author, I discover inadvertencies not a few; some perhaps that have escaped even the commentators themselves; or perhaps, in the enthusiasm of their idolatry, they resolved that they should pass for beauties. Homer however, say what they will, was man, and in all the works of man, especially in a work of such length and variety, many things will of necessity occur, that might have been better. Pope and Addison had a Dennis; and Dennis, if I mistake not, held up as he

has been to scorn and detestation, was a sensible fellow, and passed some censures upon both those writers that, had they been less just, would have hurt them less. Homer had his Zoilus; and perhaps if we knew all that Zoilus said, we should be forced to acknowledge that sometimes at least he had reason on his side. But it is dangerous to find any fault at all with what the world is determined to esteem faultless.

I rejoice, my dear friend, that you enjoy some composure, and cheerfulness of spirits: may God preserve and increase to you so great a blessing!

I am affectionately and truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, July, 1786.

I AM not glad that I am obliged to apologize for an interval of three weeks that have elapsed since the receipt of yours; but not having it in my power to write oftener than I do, I am glad that my reason is such a one as you admit. In truth, my time is very much occupied; and the more because I not only have a long and laborious work in hand, for such it would prove at any rate, but because I make it a point to bestow my utmost attention upon it, and to give it all the finishing that the most scrupulous accuracy can command. As soon as breakfast is over, I retire to my nutshell of a summer-house, which is my verse-manufactory, and here I abide seldom less than three hours, and not often more. In the afternoon I return to it again; and all the day-light that follows, except

what is devoted to a walk, is given to Homer. It is well for me, that a course which is now become necessary is so much my choice. The regularity of it, indeed, has been in the course of this last week a little interrupted, by the arrival of my dear cousin Lady Hesketh; but with the new week I shall, as they say, turn over a new leaf, and put myself under the same rigorous discipline as before. Something, and not a little, is due to the feelings that the sight of the kindest relation that ever man was blessed with must needs give birth to after so long a separation. But she, whose anxiety for my success is, I believe, greater than my own, will take care that I shall not play truant and neglect my proper business. It was an observation of a sensible man, whom I knew well in ancient days, (I mean when I was very young,) that people are never in reality happy when they boast much of being so. I feel myself accordingly well content to say, without any enlargement on the subject, that an enquirer after happiness might travel far, and not find a happier trio, than meet every day, either in our parlour, or in the parlour at the vicarage. I will not say that mine is not occasionally somewhat dashed with the sable hue of those notions, concerning myself and my situation, that have occupied, or rather possessed me so long: but on the other hand, I can also affirm, that my cousin's affectionate behaviour to us both, the sweetness of her temper, and the sprightliness of her conversation, relieve me in no small degree from the presence of them.

Mrs. Unwin bids me say how much she thanks you for your letter, which she will not fail to answer

by the first opportunity. That she is not able to find one just now will not seem strange to you, when you shall consider for a moment how much she must necessarily have been, and must still be engaged on this occasion; the whole concern of providing for the comfortable accommodation of our new neighbour having fallen upon her. She is greatly pleased with your Sermons, and has told me so repeatedly; and the pleasure that they have given her awaits me also in due time, as I am well and confidently assured: both because the subject of them is the greatest and the most interesting that can fall under the pen of any writer, and because no writer can be better qualified to discuss it judiciously and feelingly than yourself. The third set with which you favoured us, we destine to Lady Hesketh; and in so disposing of them, are inclined to believe that we shall not err far from the mark at which you yourself directed them.

Mrs. Perry, who drank tea with us the day when her brother's child was buried at Olney, desired to be remembered to you and to Mrs. Newton, when I should write, with much affection. She seems as perfectly happy in her new situation, as in a world that will not admit of happiness absolutely perfect, it is possible to be. We were truly sorry to learn on that same day from Phœbe Warner, the accident that Mrs. Newton had met with just before, and interest ourselves particularly on that account in the arrival of your next letter, which we hope will bring us an account of her being entirely cured of the painful consequences of it.

Tommy Bull has been very ill of a fever, and his

father, consequently, has been very much distressed; but we had a glimpse of him last Tuesday, when he told us that his boy was better.

Our affectionate remembrances attend yourself and Mrs. Newton, to which you acquired an everlasting right while you dwelt under the roof where we dined yesterday. It is impossible that we should set our foot over the threshold of the vicarage, without recollecting all your kindness.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Aug. 5, 1786.

I AM neither idle nor forgetful; on the contrary I think of you often, and my thoughts would more frequently find their way to my pen, were I not of necessity every day occupied in Homer. This long business engrosses all my mornings, and when the days grow shorter will have all my evenings too; at present they are devoted to walking, an exercise to me as necessary as my food.

You have heard of our intended removal. The house that is to receive us is in a state of preparation, and, when finished, will be both smarter and more commodious than our present abode. But the circumstance that recommends it chiefly is its situation. Long confinement in the winter, and indeed for the most part in the autumn too, has hurt us both. A gravel walk, thirty yards long, affords but indifferent scope to the locomotive faculty: yet it is all that we

have had to move in for eight months in the year, during thirteen years that I have been a prisoner. Had I been confined in the Tower, the battlements of it would have furnished me with a larger space. You say well, that there was a time when I was happy at Olney; and I am now as happy at Olney as I expect to be any where without the presence of God. Change of situation is with me no otherwise an object than as both Mrs. Unwin's health and mine may happen to be concerned in it. A fever of the slow and spirit-oppressing kind seems to belong to all, except the natives, who have dwelt in Olney many years; and the natives have putrid fevers. Both they and we, I believe, are immediately indebted for our respective maladies to an atmosphere encumbered with raw vapours issuing from flooded meadows; and we in particular, perhaps, have fared the worse, for sitting so often, and sometime for months, over a cellar filled with water. These ills we shall escape in the uplands; and as we may reasonably hope, of course, their consequences. But as for happiness, he that has once had communion with his Maker must be more frantic than ever I was yet, if he can dream of finding it at a distance from Him. I no more expect happiness at Weston than here, or than I should expect it, in company with felons and outlaws, in the hold of a ballast-lighter. Animal spirits, however, have their value, and are especially desirable to him who is condemned to carry a burthen, which at any rate will tire him, but which, without their aid, cannot fail to crush him. The dealings of God with me are to myself utterly unintelligible. I have never met, either in books or in conver-

sation, with an experience at all similar to my own. More than a twelvemonth has passed since I began to hope that, having walked the whole breadth of the bottom of this Red Sea, I was beginning to climb the opposite shore, and I prepared to sing the song of Moses. But I have been disappointed: those hopes have been blasted; those comforts have been wrested from me. I could not be so duped, even by the arch-enemy himself, as to be made to question the divine nature of them; but I have been made to believe, (which, you will say, is being duped still more,) that God gave them to me in derision, and took them away in vengeance. Such, however, is, and has been my persuasion many a long day; and when I shall think on that subject more comfortably, or, as you will be inclined to tell me, more rationally and scripturally, I know not. In the mean time, I embrace with alacrity every alleviation of my case, and with the more alacrity, because, whatsoever proves a relief of my distress, is a cordial to Mrs. Unwin, whose sympathy with me, through the whole of it, has been such, that, despair excepted, her burthen has been as heavy as mine. Lady Hesketh, by her affectionate behaviour, the cheerfulness of her conversation, and the constant sweetness of her temper, has cheered us both; and Mrs. Unwin not less than me. By her help we get change of air and of scene, though still resident at Olney; and by her means, have intercourse with some families in this country, with whom, but for her, we could never have been acquainted. Her presence here would, at any time, even in my happiest days, have been a comfort to me; but, in the present day, I am doubly

sensible of its value. She leaves nothing unsaid, nothing undone, that she thinks will be conducive to our well-being; and, so far as she is concerned, I have nothing to wish, but that I could believe her sent hither in mercy to myself,—then I should be thankful.

I understand that Mr. Bull is in town. If you should see him and happen to remember it, be so good as to tell him that we called at his door yesterday evening. All were well, but Mrs. B. and Mr. Greatheed were both abroad.

I am, my dear friend, with Mrs. Unwin's love to Mrs. N. and yourself, hers and yours, as ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM, August 9, 1786.

I SCRATCH a very few lines, just to prevent your saying—Well, I think the poet might contrive to afford a few minutes, notwithstanding his Homerican occupation.

I hope that you have by this time completely recovered from the indisposition occasioned by your journey. The day after your departure, Lady Hesketh said, Now we want Mr. Unwin. Her reason, at least one of her reasons, for saying so was that we had spent near half an hour together without laughing:—an interval of gravity that does not often occur where you are present.

She has not yet heard from Mr. Hornby. If a

letter should arrive by this day's post, I will insert notice of it before I close mine. We infer from his silence that he had not previously engaged himself before the receipt of hers. He has, I suppose, like most men of large fortune, who see much company, a *cacoethes* not of *scribendi* but of *non scribendi*.

Sir Robert Throckmorton is not dead,—on the contrary, alive and likely to live the longer for having had an eresypylatose eruption. That word is so seldom in my use that I will not swear I have spelt it right. If you should be equally uncertain, consult the apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton gave me yesterday a morning call, and was very chatty and agreeable. To-day we dine there. He performs for us at Weston with the liberality of a gentleman landlord, and spares no expense to make our future residence both smart and commodious. My cousin is, for her part, lavish of all manner of good things, and sets no bounds to her kindness, so you are likely to see us next year, at all points well accommodated. You will hear from her, by the way, as soon as she hears from Mr. Hornby.

I have had a most obliging letter from Mr. Smith at Clifton, giving me an account of his recovery that afforded me, as you will believe, true pleasure, enquiring when I shall send Homer to press, and assuring me that the notice of it had raised more expectation of it in the world than he could have supposed it possible a mere notice should; and including withal a twenty pound bill for his children,—the poor.

Adieu, my dear William, Pandarus and Diomede are on fire to combat, breakfast is ready, and the

moment I have swallowed it, I must commit them in terrible conflict.

Your mother's warmest love and mind attend you and yours. My sweet cousin sends her affectionate compliments.

Ever yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND, August 24, 1786.

I CATCH a minute by the tail and hold it fast, while I write to you. The moment it is fled I must go to breakfast. The post that brought me your speculations on the subject of your future pupil, conveyed to you I suppose Lady Hesketh's letter on the same subject, which has no doubt given you satisfaction. I saw Mr. Hornby's letter, than which nothing could be more handsome. His sole remark on the matter of stipend is this,—that in placing the young gentleman under the influence of such excellent tuition, he confers on him a greater advantage than he could secure to him by any other means. You see, therefore, that he is a wise man, knows how to value the opportunity, and that erudition, &c. are better than house and land; for that

> When house and land are gone and spent,
> Then larning is most excellent.

I wish you all possible success with him, and that the Muses nine, with Apollo at their head, may brighten

his intellects, and make him readily susceptible of all that you shall endeavour to infuse.

I am still occupied in refining and polishing, and shall this morning give the finishing hand to the seventh book. Fuseli does me the honour to say that the most difficult, and most interesting parts of the poem, are admirably rendered. But because he did not express himself equally pleased with the more pedestrian parts of it, my labour therefore has been principally given to the dignification of them; not but that I have retouched considerably, and made better still, the best. In short I hope to make it all of a piece, and shall exert myself to the utmost to secure that desirable point. A storyteller, so very circumstantial as Homer, must of necessity present us often with much matter in itself capable of no other embellishment than purity of diction and harmony of versification can give to it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* For our language, unless it be very severely chastised, has not the terseness, nor our measure the music of the Greek. But I shall not fail through want of industry.

We are likely to be very happy in our connexion with the Throckmortons. His reserve and mine wear off, and he talks with great pleasure of the comfort that he proposes to himself from our winter-evening conversations. His purpose seems to be, that we should spend them alternately with each other. Lady Hesketh transcribes for me at present. When she is gone, Mrs. Throckmorton takes up that business, and will be my lady of the ink-bottle for the rest of the winter. She solicited herself that office.

I will subjoin the measure of my hat. Let the new one be furnished *à la mode.*

Believe me,
My dear William, truly yours,
W. C.

Mr. Throckmorton will, I doubt not, procure Lord Petre's name, if he can, without any hint from me. He could not interest himself more in my success than he seems to do. Could he get the Pope to subscribe, I should have him; and should be glad of him and the whole conclave.

The outside circumference of the hat crown is two feet one inch and an eighth.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are my mahogany box, with a slip in the lid of it, to which I commit my productions of the lyric kind, in perfect confidence that there they are safe, and will go no farther. All who are attached to the jingling art have this peculiarity, that they would find no pleasure in the exercise, had they not one friend at least to whom they might publish what they have composed. If you approve my Latin, and your wife and sister my English, this, together with the approbation of your mother, is fame enough for me.

He who cannot look forward with comfort, must find what comfort he can in looking backward. Upon this principle, I the other day sent my imagination

upon a trip thirty years behind me. She was very obedient, and very swift of foot, presently performed her journey, and at last set me down in the sixth form at Westminster. I fancied myself once more a schoolboy, a period of life in which, if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally unacquainted with its contrary. No manufacturer of waking dreams ever succeeded better in his employment than I do. I can weave such a piece of tapestry in a few minutes, as not only has all the charms of reality, but is embellished also with a variety of beauties which, though they never existed, are more captivating than any that ever did; accordingly I was a schoolboy in high favour with my master, received a silver groat for my exercise, and had the pleasure of seeing it sent from form to form, for the admiration of all who were able to understand it. Do you wish to see this highly applauded performance? It follows on the other side.

[Torn off.]

END OF VOL. V.

CHISWICK:
PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
GRADUATE LIBRARY

DATE DUE

DEC 30 1993

NOV 24 1993

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
3 9015 02798 4395